BASEBALL JOE AT YALE

LESTER CHADWICK

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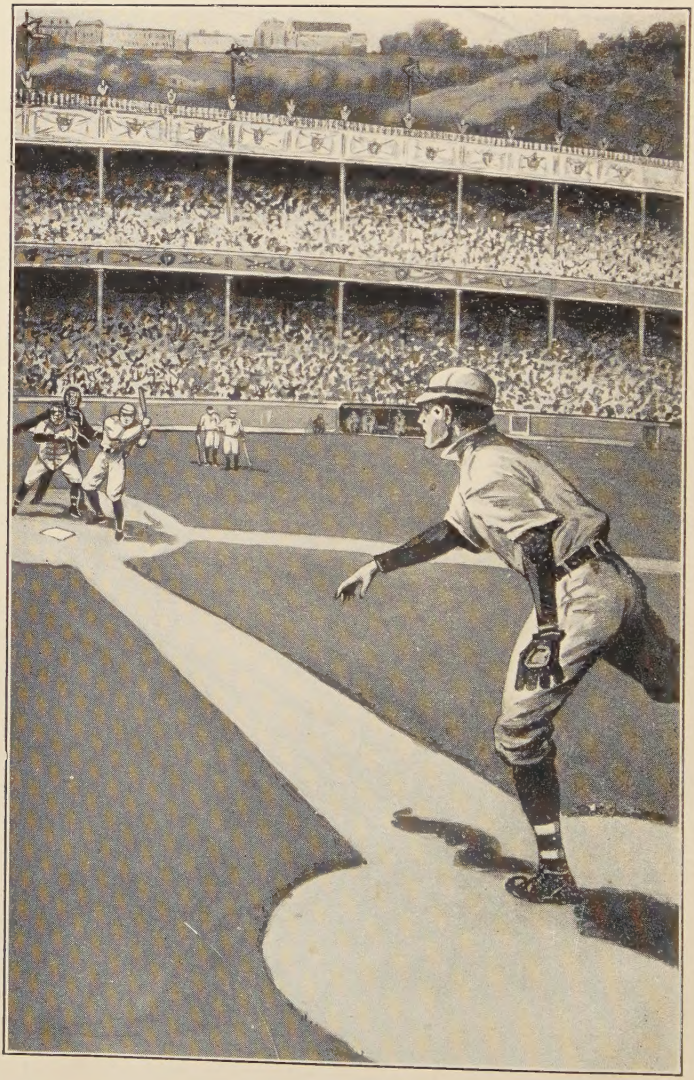

HE WAS GOING TO TRY TO STRIKE HIM OUT, AND HE DID.

Baseball Joe at Yale

Baseball Joe at Yale

OR

Pitching *for the* College Championship

By LESTER CHADWICK

AUTHOR OF

"BASEBALL JOE OF THE SILVER STARS," "BASEBALL JOE ON THE SCHOOL NINE," "THE RIVAL PITCHERS," "BATTING TO WIN," "THE WINNING TOUCHDOWN," ETC.

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NEW YORK

CUPPLES & LEON COMPANY

BOOKS BY LESTER CHADWICK

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Baseball Joe at Yale

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BASEBALL JOE AT YALE

CHAPTER I

JUST IN TIME

"JOE MATSON, I can't understand why you don't fairly jump at the chance!"

"Because I don't want to go—that's why."

"But, man alive! Half the fellows in Riverside would stand on their heads to be in your shoes."

Perhaps, Tom. But, I tell you I don't think I'm cut out for a college man, and I don't want to go," and Joe Matson looked frankly into the face of his chum, Tom Davis, as they strolled down the village street together that early September day.

"Don't want to go to Yale!" murmured Tom, shaking his head as if unable to fathom the mystery. "Why I'd work my way through, if they'd let me, and here you've got everything comparatively easy, and yet you're balking like a horse that hasn't had his oats in a month. Whew! What's up, Joe, old man?"

"Simply that I don't believe I'm cut out for that sort of life. I don't care for this college business, and there's no use pretending that I do. I'm not built that way. My mind is on something else. Of course I know a college education is a great thing, and something that lots of fellows need. But for yours truly—not!"

"I only wish I had your chance," said Tom, enviously.

"You're welcome to it," laughed Joe.

"No," and the other spoke half sadly. "Dad doesn't believe in a college career any more than you do. When I'm through at Excelsior Hall he's going to take me into business with him. He talks of sending me abroad, to get a line on the foreign end of it."

"Cracky!" exclaimed Joe. "That would suit me down to the ground—that is if I could go with a ball team."

"So you haven't gotten over your craze for baseball?" queried Tom.

"No, and I never shall. You know what I've always said—that I'd become a professional some day; and I will, too, and I'll pitch in the world series if I can last long enough," and Joe laughed.

"But look here!" exclaimed his chum, as they swung down a quiet street that led out into the country; "you can play baseball at Yale, you know."

"Maybe—if they'll let me. But you know how it is at those big universities. They are very exclusive—societies—elections—eating clubs—and all that sort of rot. A man has to be in with the bunch before he can get a show."

"That's all nonsense, and you know it!" snapped Tom. "At Yale, I warrant you, just as at every big college, a man has to stand on his own feet. Why, they're always on the lookout for good fellows on the nine, crew or eleven, and, if you can make good, you'll be pitching on the 'varsity before the Spring term opens."

"Maybe," assented Joe with rather a moody face. "Anyhow, as long as I've got to go to college I'm going to make a try for the nine. I think I can pitch a little——"

"A little!" cried Tom. "Say, I'd like to know what sort of a showing we'd have made at Excelsior Hall if it hadn't been for your pitching! Didn't you win the Blue Banner for us when it looked as if we hadn't a show? Pitch! Say if those fellows at Yale——"

"Spare my blushes," begged Joe, with a laugh. "Don't worry, I'm going to college for one reason, more than another, because mother wants me to. Dad is rather set on it, too, and so I've said I'll go. Between you and me," whispered Joe, as if he feared someone would overhear him,

"I have a faint suspicion that my respected mother wants to make a sky pilot of me."

"A minister!" cried Tom.

"That's it."

"Why—why——"

"Oh, don't worry!" laughed Joe, and then his face grew a bit sober as he continued: "I'm not half good enough—or smart enough. I'm not cut out for that sort of life. All I want is baseball and all I can get of it. That's my one ambition."

"Yes, it's easy to see that," agreed Tom. "I wonder you don't carry a horsehide about with you, and I do believe—what's this?" he demanded, pulling a bundle of papers from his chum's pocket. "Some dope on the world series, or I'm a June bug!"

'Well, I was only sort of comparing batting averages, and making a list of the peculiarities of each player—I mean about the kind of balls it is best to serve up to him."

"You're the limit!" exclaimed Tom, as he tried unsuccessfully to stop Joe from grabbing the papers away from him. "Do you think you might pitch to some of these fellows?"

"I might," replied Joe calmly. "A professional ball player lasts for some time, and when I come up for my degree on the mound at some future world series I may face some of these same men."

"Go to it, old man!" exclaimed Tom enthusiastically. "I wish I had your hopes. Well, I suppose I'll soon be grinding away with the old crowd at Excelsior, and you—you'll be at—Yale!"

"Probably," admitted Joe, with something of a sigh. "I almost wish I was going back to the old school. We had good times there!"

"We sure did. But I've got to leave you now. I promised Sis I'd go to the store for her. See you later," and Tom clasped his chum's hand.

"That reminds me," spoke Joe. "I've got to go back home, hitch up the horse, and take some patterns over to Birchville for dad."

"Wish I could go along, but I can't," said Tom. "It's a fine day for a drive. Come on over tonight."

"Maybe I will—so long," and the two friends parted to go their ways, one to dream over the good fortune of the other—to envy him—while Joe himself—Baseball Joe as his friends called him—thought rather regretfully of the time he must lose at college when, if he had been allowed his own way, he would have sought admission to some minor baseball league, to work himself up to a major position.

"But as long as the folks want me to have a college course I'll take it—and do my best," he mused.

A little later, behind the old family horse, he was jogging over the country road in the direction of a distant town, where his father, an inventor, and one of the owners of the Royal Harvester Works, had been in the habit of sending his patterns from which to have models made.

"Well, in a few weeks I'll be hiking it for New Haven," said Joe, half talking to himself. "It's going to be awful lonesome at first. I won't know a soul there. It isn't like going up from some prep school, with a lot of your own chums. Well, I've got to grin and bear it, and if I do get a chance for the 'varsity nine—oh, won't I jump at it!"

He was lost in pleasant reflections for a moment, and then went on, still talking to himself, and calling to the horse now and then, for the steed, realizing that he had an easy master behind him, was inclined to slow down to a walk every now and then.

"There are bound to be lessons, of course," said Joe. "And lectures on things I don't care any more about than the man in the moon does. I suppose, though, I've got to swallow 'em. But if I can get on the diamond once in a while it won't be so bad. The worst of it is, though, that ball playing won't begin until April at the earliest, and there's all winter to live through. I'm not

going in for football. Well, I guess I can stand it."

Once more Joe was off in a day-dream, in fancy seeing himself standing in the box before yelling thousands, winding up to deliver a swiftly-curving ball to the batter on whom "three and two" had been called, with the bases full, two men out and his team but one run ahead in the final inning.

'Oh! that's what life is!" exclaimed Joe, half aloud, and at his words the horse started to trot. "That's what makes me willing to stand four years at Yale—if I have to. And yet——"

Joe did not complete his sentence. As he swung around a bend in the road his attention was fully taken by a surprising scene just ahead of him.

A horse, attached to a carriage, was being driven down the road, and, just as Joe came in sight, the animal, for some unaccountable reason, suddenly swerved to the left. One of the wheels caught in a rut, there was a snapping, cracking sound, the wheel was "dished," and the carriage settled down on one side.

"Whoa! Whoa!" yelled Joe, fearing the horse would bolt and that perhaps a woman might be in the carriage, the top of which was up. The lad was about to spring from his own vehicle and rush to the aid of the occupant of the other, when he saw a man leap out.

With one bound the man was at the head of

his steed, holding him from running away, but there was no need, for the horse, after a calm look around, seemed to resign himself to his fate.

"Jove!" ejaculated Joe. "That was quick work. That fellow is in training, whoever he is."

Following his original plan, even though he saw no need of going to the rescue, Joe leaped from his seat. His steed, he knew, would stand without hitching. He approached the stranger.

"A bad break," murmured Joe sympathetically.

"Indeed it is, young man," replied the other in quick, tense accents. "And it comes at a particularly bad time, too."

Joe looked at him. The man seemed about thirty-five, and his face, though stern, was pleasant, as though in the company of his friends he could be very jolly. He was of dark complexion, and there was that in the set of his figure, and his poise, as he stood at the head of the horse, that at once proclaimed him an athlete, at least if not one in active training, one who could get into condition quickly.

"A bad break, and at a bad time, too," the man went on. "I never knew it to fail, when I was in a hurry."

"I guess that wheel is past fixing," spoke Joe. "You might get one at the barn here," and he nodded toward a farmhouse not far distant.

"I haven't time to make the try," said the man.

"I'm in a great hurry. How far is it from here to Preston?"

"About five miles," replied Joe.

"Hum! I never could make that in time to catch the train for New York, though I might have run it at one time. A little too heavy now," and he seemed referring to himself. "I might ride the horse, I suppose," he went on dubiously.

"He doesn't look much like a saddle animal," ventured Joe.

"No, and there isn't a saddle, either. I must get to New York though—it's important. I don't suppose you are going to Preston; are you?" he asked of Joe quickly, referring to the nearest railroad station.

"Well, I wasn't," replied the youth, "but if you're in a hurry——"

"I am—in a very great hurry. I just had about time to get the New York train, when, most unfortunately, I got into that rut. At the same time the reins got caught, and I must have pulled on the wrong one. I'm not much of a horseman, I'm afraid. The animal turned too quickly, and the wheel collapsed."

"It wasn't very strong, anyhow," remarked Joe, as he looked critically at it. "But if you want to get to Preston I can take you."

"Can you—will you? It would be a very great accommodation. I really can't afford to miss that

train. I came out here on some business, and hired this rig in Preston. I thought I would have ample time to get back, and I believe I would. But now, with this accident—I wonder if I could leave this outfit at the farmhouse, and hire another there?" he asked musingly.

"I don't believe Mr. Murchison has a horse now," said Joe, nodding toward the farmhouse. "He has about given up working his place. But you could leave this rig here to be called for, and——"

"Yes—yes!" interrupted the man, quite impatiently. "I beg your pardon," he added quickly. "I'm all upset over this accident, and I really must reach New York to-night."

"I'll drive you in!" offered Joe.

"But it will be out of your way, will it not?"

"That doesn't matter. I'm in no hurry, and going to Preston will not take me many miles off my road. I'll be glad to help you."

"Thank you. Then I'll take advantage of your offer. Shall I——?" he made a move as though to lead the horse up to the farmhouse.

"I'll attend to that," spoke Joe. "Just get in my carriage, and I'll be with you in a few minutes."

The stranger obeyed, and Joe, unhitching the horse from the broken carriage, quickly led the steed to the stable, stopping on his way to explain

to Mrs. Murchison, whom he knew slightly, the circumstances. She readily agreed to let the animal stay in their stall. Then Joe pulled the tilted carriage to one side of the road, and a few minutes later was sending his steed ahead at a pace not hitherto attained that day.

"Think we can make that train?" asked the man, who seemed immersed in his own thoughts.

"I'm going to make a big try," answered Joe.

"Do you live around here?" came the next question.

"At Riverside—about eight miles away."

The man lapsed into silence, and as Joe was rather diffident with strangers he did not press the conversation. They drove on for several miles, and suddenly the silence of the country was broken by a distant whistle.

"Is that the train?" exclaimed the man nervously, looking at his watch.

"Yes, but it's about three miles away. You can always hear it plainly here. We'll be in Preston in a few minutes now, and I'll have you at the station in time."

"I hope so," murmured the man. "I must get to New York—it means a great deal to me."

Joe urged the horse to even faster speed, and when he reached the quiet streets of Preston more than one person turned to look at the carriage,

which went along faster than vehicles usually did in that quiet community.

Once more the whistle sounded, and the man exclaimed:

"We'll never make it!"

"Yes, we will," said Joe quietly. "The station is only another block."

"I'm sure I can't thank you enough," went on the man, and his hand sought his pocket. "You say you'll notify the livery keeper?"

"Yes, I'll tell him where his horse is, and he can send for it."

"That's very kind of you. I wish you'd let me give you something—reward you for this service."

"No—no!" exclaimed Joe. "I couldn't think of it!" He saw a roll of bills in the man's hand.

"But you don't know, young man, what it means for me to catch this train. I wish you'd let me pay for your time and trouble——"

"No, indeed!" exclaimed the young pitcher. "I would do as much for anyone, and I hope he'd do the same for me."

"That's a nice way of looking at it. But are you sure you won't let me make you——" The man again held out some bills, but the look on Joe's face must have told him he was getting on dangerous ground, for he suddenly withdrew them and said:

"Well, I can't thank you enough. Some day—is that the train?" he cried, as a puffing was heard. "I mustn't miss it now."

"Here we are!" cried Joe, swinging around a corner. Down a short street was the depot, and as they came in sight of it the train pulled in.

"I—er—I wish—I must run for it!" exclaimed the man.

"Wait. I'll drive you right up!" called Joe. "I'll take your valise. You get right out and run. Have you a ticket?"

"Yes. This is exceedingly good of you. I——"

But he did not finish. Joe drove the horse up to the platform edge as the train came to a stop with a grinding of the brake shoes. The man leaped out almost before the horse had ceased running, and Joe was not a second behind him with the valise.

"Go on!" exclaimed the youth, as the man hesitated. He fairly flung himself up the car steps, and the train began to move, for Preston was little more than a flag station for the New York express.

"Thank you a thousand times!" cried the man as Joe handed up the valise. "I wish—I didn't ask your name—mine is—I ought to have a card—I—er——" he began fumbling in his pocket, and Joe half feared he was going to offer money

again. But the man seemed to be hunting for a card.

However his search was unsuccessful. He waved his hand to Joe, and called:

"Thank you once more. Perhaps I may meet you again. I meant to ask your name—too much occupied—mine is——"

But just then the train gathered speed and the engineer, opening the exhaust, effectually drowned out all other sounds in the puffing of the locomotive. Joe saw the man's lips moving, and realized that he was calling out his name, but he could not hear it. Then, with a wave of his hand the stranger went inside the car. He had caught the train just in time.

CHAPTER II

A HOME CONFERENCE

"WELL, I wonder if I'll ever see him again," mused Joe, as the train swung out of sight around a curve in the track. "It sure was a hustling time. I wonder who he was? Seemed like some sort of an athlete, and yet he didn't talk sports—nor much of anything, for that matter.

"I'm glad I could help him get his train. Funny he should want to pay me, and yet I suppose he isn't used to having favors done him. He seemed like a nice sort of fellow. Well, I've got to get over with these patterns. I'll be late getting home, I expect."

Joe's first visit was to the livery stable, where he told the proprietor of the accident.

"Hum! Well, I s'pose he was driving reckless like," said Mr. Munn, who hired out old horses and older vehicles to such few of the townspeople as did not have their own rigs.

"No, he was going slowly," said Joe. "I guess that wheel was pretty well rotted."

"Mebby so. I'm glad I charged him a good

price, and made him pay in advance. Yes, I'll send out and get the rig. Much obliged to you, Joe. Did he pay ye for bringin' him back?"

"No, I didn't want anything," and with this parting shot the young pitcher went on his way.

And, while he is jogging along to Birchville, musing over the recent happenings, I will, in a paragraph or two, tell you something more about our hero, since he is to occupy that place in these pages.

Those of you who have read the previous books in this series, need no introduction to the youth. But to those who pick up this volume to begin their acquaintance, I might state that in the initial book, called "Baseball Joe of the Silver Stars," I related how he first began his upward climb as a pitcher.

Joe Matson lived with his father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. John Matson, in the town of Riverside, in one of our New England states. Mr. Matson was an inventor of farming machinery, and after a hard struggle was now doing well financially.

Joe's ambition, ever since he began to play baseball, had been to become a pitcher, and how he made the acquaintance of Tom Davis, the boy living back of him; how they became chums, and how Joe became a member of the Silver Stars nine is told in my first book.

The nine was a typical one, such as is found in many country towns, though they played good ball. After an upward struggle Joe was made pitcher, and helped to win some big games. He made many friends, and some enemies, as all boys will.

In the second volume, called "Baseball Joe on the School Nine," I told how our hero and his chum, Tom Davis, went to Excelsior Hall, a boarding institution just outside of Cedarhurst, about a hundred miles from Riverside.

At school Joe found that it was more difficult to get a chance at his favorite position than he had imagined it would be. There, too, he had his enemies; but Joe was a plucky fighter, and would not give up. How finally he was called on to pitch in a great game, and how he, more than anyone else, helped to win the Blue Banner, you will find set down in my second book.

Three years passed, all too quickly, at Excelsior Hall, with Joe doing the twirling for the school nine at all the big games. And now, with the coming of Fall, and the beginning of the new term, he was not to go back, for, as I have intimated, he was to be sent to Yale University.

The course at Excelsior Hall was four years, but it was found that at the end of the third Joe was able to take the Yale entrance examinations, which he had done successfully. He did not enter

with flying colors, for Joe was no great scholar, but he was by no means at the foot of the ladder.

So he was to plunge at once into the turmoil of university life—his one regret being, as I have said, that he could not join the ranks of the professional baseball players. But he was willing to bide his time.

Another regret, too, was that he would be very much of a stranger at Yale. He did not know a soul there, and he wished with all his heart that Tom Davis could have gone with him, as he had to Excelsior Hall. But Tom's parents had other views of life for him.

"It doesn't seem like three years ago that I first started for Excelsior," mused Joe, as he drove along. "I sure was nervous then, and I'm in a worse funk now. Well, there's no help for it. I've got to stick it out. No use disappointing dad and momsey. I only hope I make out half way decently."

His errand accomplished, he drove back home, arriving rather late, and, to his mother's anxious inquiries as to what kept him, he related the happening of the broken carriage.

"And you don't know who he was?" asked Clara, Joe's sister, curiously.

"No, sis. Say, but you're looking pretty tonight! Got your hair fixed differently, somehow.

Somebody coming?" and playfully he pinched her red cheeks.

"Yes, Mabel Davis is coming to call," replied Clara, pretending to be very busy arranging some articles on the mantle.

"Oh, ho! So that's how the wind blows!" exclaimed Joe, with a laugh. "But I'll wager someone besides Mabel is coming over. Tom Davis told me to come and see him, Mabel is going out, you're all togged up—say, sis, who's the lucky chap?"

"Oh, don't bother me!" exclaimed the blushing girl.

"That's all right. Tom and I will come around later and put a tic-tac on the window, when you and Mabel, and the two chaps, are in the parlor."

"I thought you had gotten all over such childish tricks—and you a Yale Freshman!" exclaimed Clara, half sarcastically.

"Well, I suppose I will have to pass 'em up—worse luck!" exclaimed her brother, with something like a groan. "Have your fun, sis. It'll soon be over."

"Oh, my! What a mournful face!" laughed the girl. "There, run along now, little boy, and don't bother me."

Joe looked at her for a moment, and the conviction grew on him that his sister was prettier than ever, with that blush on her face.

"Little sister is growing up," thought Joe, as he turned away. "She'll be a young lady soon—she's growing up. Well, I guess we all are," and our hero sighed as though he could scarcely bear the weight of responsibility on his own shoulders.

This was after supper, and as Joe left the room, and Clara hastened to her apartment, there to indulge in further "prinking," as Joe called it, Mr. and Mrs. Matson looked at each other.

"What's getting into Joe, I wonder?" spoke his father. "He's acting rather strange of late."

"Oh, I expect the responsibility of college life is making itself felt," said Mrs. Matson. "But I'm proud that I have a son who is going to Yale. It is good you can afford it, John."

"Yes, Ellen, I am too. Education is a great thing, and a college course does a lot for a young fellow. I never had the chance myself, but perhaps it's just as well."

"I am determined that Joe shall have all the advantages we can give him—and Clara, too," went on the wife. "I think Joe should be very proud and happy. In a short time he will be attending one of the best colleges in the world."

"Yet he doesn't seem very happy," said Mr. Matson, musingly.

"And I wonder why," went on his wife. "Of course I know he wasn't very keen about going, when I proposed it, but he gave in. I'm sure it's

baseball that made him want to stay on at Excelsior Hall."

"Probably. Joe eats, sleeps and dreams baseball."

"I do wish he would get that idea of being a professional baseball player out of his mind," went on Mrs. Matson, and her tone was a trifle worried. "It is no career to choose for a young man."

"No, I suppose not," said her husband slowly. "And yet there are many good men in professional baseball—some rich ones too, I guess," he added with a shrewd laugh.

"As if money counted, John!".

"Well, it does in a way. We are all working for it, one way or another, and if a man can earn it throwing a ball to another man, I don't see why that isn't as decent and honorable as digging sewers, making machinery, preaching, doctoring, being a lawyer or a banker. It all helps to make the world go round."

"Oh, John! I believe you're as bad as Joe!"

"No, Ellen. Though I do like a good game of baseball. I don't think it's the only thing there is, however, as Joe seems to, of late. I don't altogether uphold him in his wish to be a professional, but, at the same time, there's nothing like getting into the niche in life that you're just fitted for.

"There are too many square pegs in round

holes now. Many a poor preacher would be a first-class farmer, and lots of struggling lawyers or doctors would do a sight better in a shop, or, maybe even on the ball field. Those sentiments aren't at all original with me," he added modestly; "but they are true just the same. I'd like to see Joe do what he likes best, for then I know he'd do that better than anything else in the world."

"Oh, John! surely you wouldn't want to see him a professional ball player?"

"Well, I don't know. There are lots worse positions in life."

"But I'm glad he's going to Yale!" exclaimed Mrs. Matson, as the little family conference came to an end.

CHAPTER III

ONE LAST GAME

"SAY, Tom, do you know what I've got a good notion to do?"

"Indeed I haven't, Joe, unless you're going to go out West and shoot Indians, or some such crazy stunt as that."

"Forget it! But you know I've got to start for Yale in about another week."

"That's right. The time is getting short. Excelsior opens four days from now, but I'm not going to drill in with the first bunch. I don't have to report quite so soon. I'm a Senior now, you know."

"So you are. I almost wish I was with you."

"Oh, nonsense! And you going to Yale! But what was it you started to say?"

"Oh, yes, I almost forgot. Say, why can't we have one last game before we have to leave town? One rattling good game of baseball to wind up the season! I'd just love to get into a uniform again, and I guess you would too. Can't we pick up

enough of the old Silver Stars to make a nine, with what we can induce to play from among the lads in town?"

"I guess so."

"Then let's do it. The Resolute team is still in existence, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I haven't kept much track of them. I've been away most all Summer, you know."

"And so have I, but I think we could get up a game for Saturday. I believe we could get quite a crowd, but we wouldn't charge admission. What do you say?"

"I'm with you. It would be sport to have a game. I wonder how we can arrange for it?"

"I've got to go over to Rocky Ford for dad to-day," went on Joe, "and I'll see if I can't get in touch with some of the Resolutes. It may be that they have a game on, and, again, they may have disbanded. But it's worth trying. Then you see as many of the fellows here as you can, and get up a nine. There ought to be five or six of the old Silver Stars around."

"I'll do it! Wow! It will be sport to get on the diamond again before we have to buckle down to the grind."

"I hope I haven't forgotten how to pitch," went on Joe. "Let's get a ball and do a little practising out in the lots."

The two chums, somewhat older, more experi-

enced and certainly better players than when we first met them, three years before, were soon tossing the ball back and forth, Joe warming up to his accustomed work as a twirler.

That was a beaut!" exclaimed Tom, who was catching.

"Did the curve break well?"

"Couldn't have been better. You'll fool 'em all right with that twist."

"I'm a little stiff yet. Well, let's see what we can do toward getting up a game."

Joe went to Rocky Ford that afternoon, and was fortunate in finding the new manager of the Resolutes, the one-time rivals of the Silver Stars. The team had greatly changed, and had been strengthened by some new players. They had not yet broken up for the season, and, as they had no game on for Saturday, the manager readily agreed to come to Riverside with his lads, and take on the Silver Stars in a sort of exhibition contest.

"I suppose you'll pitch?" spoke the manager, as Joe was about to leave for home.

"Yes, I want to. Why?"

"Nothing, only maybe we better handicap your team, or else you'd better allow us half a dozen runs to start with," was the laughing answer.

"I'm not as formidable as all that," retorted Joe. "Are any of the old boys playing yet?"

"Oh, yes, quite a few. There's Art Church,

Lew Entry, Ted Neefus and Hank Armstrong."

"I'll be glad to see 'em again," spoke Joe.

When he reached Riverside late that afternoon Tom met him and gleefully informed his chum that he had been able to get up a nine.

"Then we'll have a game!" cried Joe. "Will you catch for me?

"If you think I can."

"Sure you can. Wow! We'll have some fun."

The news of the coming game between the Silver Stars—or a team somewhat representing them—and the Resolutes aroused considerable enthusiasm in Riverside and the neighboring towns. There was a prospect of a large throng, and when Saturday came—with as fine a specimen of weather as heart could wish—there was a great outpouring of "fans."

The Silver Stars were first on the field, and though the team as then constituted had never played together, still after a little practice they got acquainted with each other, and were soon working in unison.

Joe and Tom formed the battery, and they seemed an effective combination as they warmed up outside the diamond. Then the Resolutes arrived and they, too, began their practice.

"We're going to have a big crowd," remarked Joe, as he saw the stands filling, for Riverside boasted of a fairly good field, where the semi-

profesional team held forth in the Summer. But the season was about over now.

"It's like old times," remarked Tom. "Come on, now some hot ones to finish up with, and then it'll be most time to call the game."

The details were arranged, the umpire chosen, the batting orders submitted, and the teams came in off the field. The Silver Stars were to bat last, and as Joe walked out to the mound to do the twirling, he was greeted by many friends and acquaintances who had not seen him since the Summer vacation had started. Some news of his prospective leaving for Yale must have gotten around, for he was observed with curious, and sometimes envious eyes.

"Joe's getting to be quite a boy," remarked Mr. Jacob Anderson, one of Riverside's enthusiastic baseball supporters, to his friend, Mr. James Blake.

"Yes, he's a wonderful pitcher, I hear. Seems sort of queer how the boys grow up. Why, only a few years ago he was a small chap, playing around the vacant lots."

"Yes, time does manage to scoot along," spoke the other. "Well, I guess we'll see a good game."

As Joe and Tom paused for a brief consultation before opening the performance, the catcher, glancing toward the grandstand, uttered a surprised exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe.

"That fellow with my sister—I meant to tell you about him. He was over to your house the other night, when he and sis, and Charlie Masterford called on your sister."

"Oh, ho! So it was Charlie that Clara was fixing up for!" exclaimed Joe. "I'll have some fun with her. I guess she's at the game to-day. But what about the fellow with your sister?"

"He's a Yale man."

"A Yale man—you mean a graduate?"

"No, he goes there now—Sophomore I heard sis say. She was boasting about him, but I didn't pay much attention. I meant to tell you, but I forgot it."

"A Yale man," mused Joe.

"Yes, that's him, with the flower in his coat. Sort of a sport I guess. Sis said he was on the nine, but I don't know where he plays. Like to meet him? I don't know him myself, but I can get sis to present us. She met him at some dance this Summer, and found he had relatives here he intended to visit. She asked him to call—say, isn't it great how the girls do that?—and he did—the other night. Then he must have made a date with her. Like to meet him? Name's—let's see now—I did have it. Oh, I remember, it's Weston—Ford Weston. Want to meet him after the game?"

"No—I—I don't believe I do," said Joe slowly. "He may think I am sort of currying favor. I'll wait until I get to Yale, and then, if I get the chance, I'll meet him. He looks like a decent chap."

"Yes, Mabel is crazy about him," said Tom; "but all girls are that way I guess. None for mine! Well, shall we start?"

The batter was impatiently tapping his stick on the home plate.

"Play ball!" called the umpire, and, as Joe walked to his place he gave a glance toward where Mabel Davis sat with a tall, good-looking chap.

"A Yale man," mused Joe, "and on the nine. I wonder what he'll think of my pitching?" and, somehow, our hero felt a bit nervous, and he wished he had not known of the presence of the collegian. As he began winding up to deliver the ball he fancied he detected an amused smile on the face of Ford Weston.

CHAPTER IV

A SNEERING LAUGH

"COME on now, Art! Line one out!"

"A home run, old man! You can do it!"

"Slam one over the fence!"

"Poke it to the icehouse and come walking!"

"We've got the pitcher's goat already! Don't mind him, even if he is going to college!"

These were only a few of the good-natured cries that greeted Art Church as he stood at the home plate, waiting for Joe Matson to deliver the ball. And, in like manner, Joe was gently gibed by his opponents, some of whom had not faced him in some time. To others he was an unknown quantity.

But even those newest members of the Resolutes had heard of Joe's reputation, and there was not a little of the feeling in the visiting nine that they were doomed to defeat through the opposing pitcher.

"Come on now, Art, it's up to you."

"Give him a fair chance, Joe, and he'll knock the cover off!"

"Play ball!" snapped the umpire, and Joe, who had been exchanging the regulation practice balls with the catcher signalled that he was ready to deliver the first one of the game. The catcher called for a slow out, but Joe shook his head. He knew Art Church of old, and remembered that this player fairly "ate 'em up." Joe gave the signal to Tom that he would send a swift in-shoot, and his chum nodded comprehendingly.

"Ball one!" yelled the umpire, and Joe could not restrain a start of surprise. True, Art had not swung at the horsehide, but it had easily clipped the plate, and, Joe thought, should have been called a strike. But he said nothing, and, delivering the same sort of a ball the next time, he had the satisfaction of deceiving the batter, who swung viciously at it.

"He's only trying you out!" was shouted at Joe. "He'll wallop the next one!"

But Art Church did not, and waiting in vain for what he considered a good ball, he struck at the next and missed, while the third strike was called on him without his getting a chance to move his bat.

"Oh, I guess the umpire isn't against us after all," thought Joe, as he threw the ball over to first while the next batter was coming up.

"How's that?" yelled Tom in delight. "Guess there aren't going to be any home runs for you Resolutes."

"Oh, it's early yet," answered the visiting captain.

But the Resolutes were destined to get no runs in that half-inning. One man popped up a little fly, which was easily taken care of, and the next man Joe struck out cleanly.

He was beginning to feel that he was getting in form again. All that Spring he had pitched fine games at Excelsior Hall, but, during the Summer vacation, at the close of the boarding school, he had gone a bit stale. He could feel it himself. His muscles were stiff from lack of use, and he had not the control of the ball, which was one of his strong points. Neither could he get up the speed which had always been part of his assets, and which, in after years, made him such a power in the big league.

Still Joe felt that he was doing fairly well, and he knew that, as the game went on, and he warmed up, he would do better.

"We ought to win," he told Tom Davis, as they walked to the bench. "That is if we get any kind of support, and if our fellows can hit their pitcher. What sort of a chap is he?"

"Don't know much about him. He's been at it all Summer though, and ought to be in pretty good

practice. We'll soon tell. Len Oswald is first up."

But that was all Len did—get up. He soon sat down again, not having hit the ball.

"Oh, I guess we've got some pitcher!" yelled the Resolutes.

"Even if he isn't going to college!" added someone, and Joe felt his face burn. He was not at all puffed up over the fact that he was going to Yale, and he disliked exceedingly to get that reputation—so unjustly. But he did not protest.

When the second man went out without getting to first base, it looked as if the contest was going to be a close one, and there began to be whispers of a "pitchers' battle."

"'Pitchers' battle' nothing!" exclaimed Joe in a whisper to Tom. "That fellow can't curve a ball. I've been watching him. He's got a very fast straight delivery, and that's how he's fooling 'em. I'm going to hit him, and so can the rest of us if we don't let him bluff. Just stand close up to the plate and plug it. Who comes next?"

"Percy Parnell."

"Oh, wow! Well, unless he's improved a whole lot he won't do much."

But Percy had, for the next moment he got the ball just where he wanted it, and slammed it out for a three bagger amid enthusiastic howls. Then

the other Silver Star players became aware of the opposing pitcher's weakness and began hitting him, until three runs had come in. Then, in response to the frantic appeals of the "rooters" and their own captain, the Resolutes took a brace and halted the winning streak. But it had begun, and nothing could stop it.

Joe, much elated that his diagnosis of his opponent had been borne out, again took his place in the box. He determined to show what he could do in the way of pitching, having done some warming-up work with Tom during the previous inning.

He struck out the first man cleanly, and the second likewise. The third hit him for two fouls, and then, seeming to have become familiar with Joe's style, whacked out one that was good for two bases.

"We're finding him! We're finding him!" yelled the excited Resolutes. "Only two down, and we've got a good hitter coming."

Joe saw that his fellow players were getting a little "rattled," fearing perhaps that he was going to pieces, so, to delay the game a moment, and pull himself together, he walked toward home, and pretended to have a little conference with the catcher.

In reality they only mumbled meaningless words, for Tom knew Joe's trick of old. But the little break seemed to have a good effect, for the

young pitcher struck out the next man and no runs came in.

"Oh, I guess yes!" cried the Silver Star crowd.

The home team got two runs the next inning, and with goose eggs in their opponents' frame it began to look more like a one-sided contest.

"Boys, we've got to wallop 'em!" exclaimed the visiting captain earnestly, as they once more came to bat.

Joe's arm was beginning to feel the unaccustomed strain a trifle, and to limber up the muscles he "wound-up" with more motions and elaborateness than usual as he again took the mound. As he did so he heard from the grandstand a loud laugh—a laugh that fairly bubbled over with sneering, caustic mirth, and a voice remarked, loud enough for our hero to hear:

"I wonder where he learned that wild and weird style of pitching? He'll fall all apart if he doesn't look out!"

He cast a quick glance in the direction of the voice and saw Ford Weston, who sat beside Mabel Davis, fairly doubled up with mirth. Mabel seemed to be remonstrating with him.

"Don't break your arm!" called Ford, laughing harder than before.

"Hush!" exclaimed Mabel.

Joe felt the dull red of shame and anger mounting to his cheeks.

"So that's a Yale man," he thought. "And I'm going to Yale. I wonder if they're all like that there? I—I hope not."

And, for the life of him, Joe could not help feeling a sense of anger at the youth who had so sneeringly laughed at him.

"And he's a Yale man—and on the nine," mused Joe.

CHAPTER V

OFF FOR YALE

"We've got the game in the refrigerator—on ice."

"Take it easy now, Silver Stars."

"Let 'em get a few runs if they want to."

Thus spoke some of the spectators, and a number of the members of the home team, as the last half of the seventh inning started with the score ten to three in favor of the Silver Stars. It had not been a very tight contest on either side, and errors were numerous. Yet, in spite of the sneering laugh of the Yale man, Joe knew that he had pitched a good game. They had hit him but seldom, and one run was due to a muffed ball by the centre fielder.

"Well, I guess you haven't forgotten how to pitch," exulted Tom, as he sat beside his chum on the bench.

Behind them, and over their heads, sat the spectators in the grandstand, and when the applause at a sensational catch just made by the left

fielder, retiring the third man, had died away the voices of many in comment on the game could be heard.

"Oh, I'm not so very proud of myself," remarked Joe. "I can see lots of room for improvement. But I'm all out of practice. I think I could have held 'em down better if we'd had a few more games to back us up."

"Sure thing. Well, this is a good way to wind up the season. I heard a little while ago that the Resolutes came over here to make mince-meat of us. They depended a whole lot on their pitcher, but you made him look like thirty cents."

"Oh, I don't know. He's got lots of speed, and if he had the benefit of the coaching we got at Excelsior Hall he'd make a dandy."

"Maybe. I'm going over here to have a chin with Rodney Burke. I won't be up for a good while."

"And I guess I won't get a chance this inning," remarked Joe, as he settled back on the bench. As he did so he was aware of a conversation going on in the stand over his head.

"And you say he's going to Yale this term?" asked someone—a youth's deep-chested tones.

"I believe so— yes," answered a girl. Joe recognized that Mabel Davis was speaking. "He's a chum of my brother's," she went on.

"They're talking of me," thought Joe, and he

looked apprehensively at his companions on the bench, but they seemed to be paying no attention to him, for which he was grateful. They were absorbed in the game.

"Going to Yale; eh?" went on the youth's voice, and Joe felt sure he was Ford Weston. "Well, we eat his kind up down there!"

"Hush! You musn't talk so of my friends," warned Mabel, and yet she laughed.

"Oh, if he's a friend of yours, that's different;" came the retort. "You're awful strong with me, Mabel, and I'd do anything you asked."

The girl laughed in a pleased sort of way, and Joe, with a wild feeling in his heart, felt a certain scorn for both of them.

"Yes, he and my brother are chums," resumed Mabel. "They went to boarding school together, but Joe is going to Yale. He is just crazy about baseball—in fact Tom is, too, but Joe wants to be a great pitcher."

"Does he think he's going to pitch at Yale?"

"I believe he does!"

"Then he's got a whole lot more thinks coming!" laughed the Yale man. "He's about the craziest specimen of a tosser I ever stacked up against. He'll never make the Yale scrub!"

"Hush! Haven't I told you not to talk so about my friend?" insisted the girl, but there was still laughter in her tones.

"All right Miss Mabel. I'll do anything you say. Wow! That was a pretty hit all right. Go it, old man! A three-bagger!" and in the enthusiasm over the game the Yale man dropped Joe as a topic of conversation.

Our hero, with burning cheeks, got up and strolled away. He had heard too much, but he was glad they did not know he had unintentionally been listening.

The game ended with the Silver Stars winners, but the score was not as close as seemed likely in the seventh inning. For the Resolutes, most unexpectedly, began hitting Joe, though he managed to pull himself together in the ninth, and retired his opponents hitless. The last half of the ninth was not played, as the home team had a margin of two runs.

"Well, we did 'em," remarked Tom, as he and Joe walked off the field. "But they sort of pulled up on us. Did they get on to your curves?"

"No," spoke Joe listlessly. "I—er—I got a little tired I guess."

"No wonder. You're not in trim. But you stiffened up at the last."

"Oh, yes," but Joe knew it was not weariness that accounted for his being hit so often. It was because of an inward rage, a sense of shame, and, be it confessed, a bit of fear.

For well he knew how little it would take, in

such a college as Yale, to make or mar a man. Should he come, heralded perhaps by the unfriendly tongue of the lad who had watched him pitch that day—heralded as one with a "swelled head"—as one who thought himself a master-pitcher—Joe knew he could never live it down.

"I'll never get my chance—the chance for the 'varsity—if he begins to talk," mused Joe, and for a time he was miserable.

"Come on over to grub," invited Tom. "Sis and her latest find will be there—that Yale chap. Maybe you'd like to meet him. If you don't we can sneak in late and there'll be some eats left."

"No, thanks, I don't believe I will," replied Joe listlessly.

"Don't you want to meet that Yale fellow? Maybe he could give you some points."

"No, I'd rather not."

"All right," assented Tom quickly. Something in his chum's tones made him wonder what was the matter, but he did not ask.

"I've got some packing to do," went on Joe, conscious that he was not acting very cordially toward his old schoolmate. "I may see you later."

"Sure, any time. I'll be on hand to see you off for Yale, old man."

"Yale!" whispered Joe, as he swung off toward his own home, half-conscious of the pointing fingers and whispered comments of a number of

street urchins who were designating him as "dat's de pitchin' guy what walloped de Resolutes!"

"Yale!" thought Joe. "I'm beginning to hate it!"

And then a revulsion of feeling suddenly came over him.

"Hang it all!" he exclaimed as he stumbled along. "This is no way for a fellow to feel if he's going to college. I've got to perk up. If I am to go to Yale, I'm going to do my best to be worth it!"

But something rankled in his heart, and, try as he might he could not help clenching his teeth and gripping his hands as he thought of Ford Weston.

"I—I'd like to fight him!" murmured Tom. "I wonder if they allow fights at Yale?"

Several days later you might have heard this in the Matson home.

"Well, Joe, have you got everything packed?"

"Don't forget to send me a flag."

"You've got your ticket all right, haven't you?"

"Write as soon as you get there."

"And whatever you do, don't go around with wet feet. It's coming on Winter now——"

"Mother! Mother!" broke in Mr. Matson, with a laugh at his wife and daughter on either side of Joe, questioning and giving advice by turns. "You're like hens with one chicken. Don't coddle him so. He's been away before, and he's getting

big enough to know his way around by this time."

Well might he say so, for Joe had grown fast in the past three years, and, though but nineteen, was taller than his father, who was not a small man.

"Of course he's been away," agreed Mrs. Matson, "but not as far as New Haven, and going to Yale is some different from Excelsior Hall, I guess."

"I *know* so," murmured Joe, with a wink at his father.

"I'm going to the station with you," declared Clara. "Here comes Tom. I guess he's going, too."

"Well, I'll say good-bye here," said Mrs. Matson, and her voice trembled a little. "Good-bye, my boy. I know you'll do what's right, and make us all proud of you!"

Joe's answer was a kiss, and then, with her handkerchief much in evidence, Mrs. Matson left the room.

"Come! Come!" laughed Mr. Matson. "You'll make Joe sorry he's going if you keep on."

"The only thing I'm sorry about," replied the lad, "is that it'll be a good while until Spring."

"Baseball; eh?" queried his father. "Well, I suppose you'll play if you get the chance. But, Joe, just remember that life isn't all baseball, though

that has its place in the scheme of things. You're not going to Yale just to play baseball."

"But, if I get a chance, I'm going to play my head off!" exclaimed the lad, and, for the first time in some days there came a fierce light of joy into his eyes.

"That's the spirit, son," exclaimed Mr. Matson. "And just remember that, while you want to win, it isn't the only point in the game. Always be a gentleman—play hard; but play clean! That's all the advice I'm going to give you," and with a shake of his hand the inventor followed his wife from the room.

"Well, I guess I'm going to be left alone to do the honors," laughed Clara. "Come on now, it's almost train time. Oh, hello, Tom!" she added, as Joe's chum entered. "Did you bring any extra handkerchiefs with you?"

"Say I'll pull your hairpins out, Clara, if you don't quit fooling!" threatened her brother.

Joe's baggage, save for a small valise, had been sent on ahead, and now, calling a good-bye to his parents, but not going to them, for he realized that it would only make his mother cry more, the young collegian, escorted by his sister and chum, started for the station.

Our hero found a few of his friends gathered there, among them Mabel Davis.

"And so you're off for Yale," she remarked,

and Joe noticed that she too, like his sister, seemed to have "grown up" suddenly in the last year. Mabel was quite a young lady now.

"Yes, I'm off," replied Joe, rather coldly.

"Oh, I think it's just grand to go to a big college," went on Mabel. "I wish papa would let Tom go."

"I wish so myself," chimed in her brother.

"I know one Yale man," went on Mabel. "I met him this Summer. He was at the game the other day. I could write to him, and tell him you are coming."

"Please don't!" exclaimed Joe so suddenly that Mabel drew back, a little offended.

"Wa'al, I want to shake hands with you, an' wish you all success," exclaimed a voice at Joe's elbow. He turned to see Mr. Ebenezer Peterkin, a neighbor. "So you're off for college. I hear they're great places for football and baseball! Ha! Ha! 'Member th' time you throwed a ball through our winder, and splashed Alvirah's apple sass all over her clean stove? 'Member that, Joe?"

"Indeed I do, Mr. Peterkin. And how you told Tom and me to hurry off, as your wife was coming after us."

"That's right! Ha! Ha! Alvirah was considerable put out that day. She'd just got her stove blacked, an' that sass was some of her best. Th'

ball landed plump into it! 'Member?" and again the old man chuckled with mirth.

"I remember," laughed Joe. "And how Tom and I blackened the stove, and helped clean up the kitchen for your wife. I was practising pitching that day."

"Oh, yes, you *pitched* all right," chuckled the aged man. "Wa'al, Joe, I wish you all sorts of luck, an' if you do pitch down there at Yale, don't go to splattering no apple sass!"

"I won't," promised the lad.

There were more congratulations, more wishes for success, more hand shakings and more good-byes, and then the whistle of the aproaching train was heard. Somehow Joe could not but remember the day he had driven the man to the station just in time to get his train. He wondered if he would ever see that individual again.

"Good-bye, Joe!"

"So long, old man!"

"Don't forget to write!"

"Play ball!"

"Good-bye, Joe!"

Laughter, cheers, some tears too, but not many, waving hands, and amid all this Joe entered the train. He waved back as long as he could see any of them, and then he settled back in his seat.

He was off for Yale—for Yale, with all its traditions, its mysteries, its learning and wiseness, its

"GOOD-BYE, JOE!"

sports and games, its joys and sorrows—its heart-burnings and its delights, its victories—and defeats! Off for Yale. Joe felt his breath choking him, and into his eyes there came a mist as he gazed out of the window. Off for Yale—and baseball!

CHAPTER VI

ON THE CAMPUS

JOE MATSON gazed about him curiously as the train drew into the New Haven station. He wondered what his first taste of Yale life was going to be like, and he could not repress a feeling of nervousness.

He had ridden in the end car, and he was not prepared for what happened as the train drew to a slow stop. For from the other coaches there poured a crowd of students—many Freshmen like himself but others evidently Sophomores, and a sprinkling of Juniors and the more lordly Seniors. Instantly the place resounded to a din, as friends met friends, and as old acquaintances were renewed.

"Hello, Slab!"

"Where have you been keeping yourself, Pork Chops!"

"By jinks! There's old Ham Fat!"

"Come on, now! Get in line!"

This from one tall lad to others, evidently from

the same preparatory school. "Show 'em what we can do!"

"Hi there, Freshies! Off with those hats!"

This from a crowd of Sophomores who saw the newly-arrived first-year lads.

"Don't you do it! Keep your lids on!"

"Oh, you will!" and there was a scrimmage in which the offending headgear of many was sent spinning. Joe began to breathe deeply and fast. If this was a taste of Yale life he liked it. Somewhat Excelsior Hall it was, but bigger—broader.

Gripping his valise, he climbed down the steps, stumbling in his eagerness. On all sides men crowded around him and the others who were alighting.

"Keb! Carriage! Hack! Take your baggage!"

Seeing others doing the same, Joe surrendered his valise to an insistent man. As he moved out of the press, wondering how he was to get to the house where he had secured a room, he heard someone behind him fairly yell in his ear:

"Oh ho! Fresh! Off with that hat!"

He turned to see two tall, well-dressed lads, in somewhat "swagger" clothes, arms linked, walking close behind him. Remembering the fate of the others, Joe doffed his new derby, and smiled.

"That's right," complimented the taller of the two Sophomores.

"Glad you think so," answered Joe.

"Well?" snapped the other Sophomore sharply.

"Glad you think so," repeated our hero.

"Well?" rasped out the first.

Joe looked from one to the other in some bewilderment. He knew there was some catch, and that he had not answered catagorically, but for the moment he forgot.

"Put the handle on," he was reminded, and then it came to him.

"Sir," he added with a smile.

"Right, Freshie. Don't forget your manners next time," and the two went swinging along, rolling out the chorus of some class song.

The confusion increased. More students poured from the train, overwhelming the expressmen with their demands and commands. The hacks and carriages were being rapidly filled. Orders were being shouted back and forth. Exuberance was on every side.

"Oh ho! This way, Merton!" yelled someone, evidently a signal for the lads from that school to assemble.

"Over here, Lisle!"

"There's Perk!"

"Yes, and who's he got with him?"

"Oh, some Fresh. Come on, you goat. I'm hungry!"

Joe felt himself exulting, after all, that he was to be a part of this throbbing, pulsating life—part of the great college. He hung back, friendless and alone, and it was borne on him with a rush just how friendless and alone he was when he saw so many others greeted by friends and mates. With all his heart Joe wished he had come up from some preparatory school, where he would have had classmates with him. But it was too late now.

He made up his mind that he would walk to his rooming house, not because he wanted to save the carriage hire, but he would have to get in a hack all alone, and he was afraid of the gibes and taunts that might be hurled at the lone Freshman. He had engaged the room in advance, and knew it would be in readiness. Later he intended to join one of the many eating clubs for his meals, but for the present he expected to patronize a restaurant, for the rooming house did not provide commons.

"I'll walk," decided Joe, and, inquiring the way from a friendly hackman, he started off. As he did so he was aware of a tall lad standing near him, and, at the mention of the street Joe designated, this lad started, and seemed about to speak.

For a moment Joe, noticing that he, too, was

alone, was tempted to address him. And then, being naturally diffident, and in this case particularly so, he held back.

"He may be some stand-offish chap," reasoned Joe, "and won't like it. I'll go a bit slow."

He swung away from the station, glad to be out of the turmoil, but for a time it followed him, the streets being filled with students afoot and in vehicles. The calling back and forth went on, until, following the directions he had received, Joe turned down a quieter thoroughfare.

"That must be the college over there," he said after he had swung across the city common, and saw looming up in the half mist of the early September night, the piles of brick and stone. "Yale College—and I'm going there!"

He paused for a moment to contemplate the structures, and a wave of sentimental feeling surged up into his heart. He saw the outlines of the elms—the great elms of Yale.

Joe passed on, and, as he walked, wondering what lay before him, he could not help but think of the chances—the very small chances he had—in all that throng of young men—to make the 'varsity nine.

"There are thousands of fellows here," mused Joe, "and all of them may be as good as I. Of course not all of them want to get on the nine—

and fewer want to pitch. But—Oh, I wonder if I can make it? I wonder——"

It was getting late. He realized that he had better go to his room, and see about supper. Then in the morning would come reporting at college and arranging about his lectures—and the hundred and one things that would follow.

"I guess I've got time enough to go over and take a look at the place," he mused. "I can hike it a little faster to my shack after I take a peep," he reasoned. "I just want to see what I'm going to stack up against."

He turned and started toward the stately buildings in the midst of the protecting elms. Other students passed him, talking and laughing, gibing one another. All of them in groups—not one alone as was Joe. Occasionally they called to him as they passed:

"Off with that hat, Fresh!"

He obeyed without speaking, and all the while the loneliness in his heart was growing, until it seemed to rise up like some hard lump and choke him.

"But I won't! I won't!" he told himself desperately. "I won't give in. I'll make friends soon! Oh, if only Tom were here!"

He found himself on the college campus. Pausing for a moment to look about him, his heart welling, he heard someone coming from the rear. In-

stinctively he turned, and in the growing dusk he thought he saw a familiar figure.

"Off with that hat, Fresh!" came the sharp command.

Joe was getting a little tired of it, but he realized that the only thing to do was to obey.

"All right," he said, listlessly.

"All right, what?" was snapped back at him.

For a moment Joe did not answer.

"Come on, Fresh!" cried the other, taking a step toward him. "Quick—all right—what?"

"Sir!" ripped out Joe, as he turned away.

A moment later from a distant window there shone a single gleam of light that fell on the face of the other lad. Joe started as he beheld the countenance of Ford Weston—the youth who had laughed at his pitching.

"That's right," came in more mollified tones from the Sophomore. "Don't forget your manners at Yale, Fresh! Or you may be taught 'em in a way you won't like," and with an easy air of assurance, and an insulting, domineering swagger, Weston took himself off across the campus.

CHAPTER VII

A NEW CHUM

FOR a moment Joe stood there, his heart pounding away under his ribs, uncertain what to do—wondering if the Sophomore had recognized him. Then, as the other gave no sign, but continued on his way, whistling gaily, Joe breathed easier.

"The cad!" he whispered. "I'd like to—to ——" He paused. He remembered that he was at Yale—that he was a Freshman and that he was supposed to take the insults of those above him—of the youth who had a year's advantage over him in point of time.

"Yes, I'm a Freshman," mused Joe, half bitterly. "I'm supposed to take it all—to grin and bear it—for the good of my soul and conscience, and so that I won't get a swelled head. Well," he concluded with a whimsical smile, "I guess there's no danger."

He looked after the retreating figure of the Sophomore, now almost lost in the dusk that enshrouded the campus, and then he laughed softly.

"After all!" he exclaimed, "it's no more than

I've done to the lads at Excelsior Hall. I thought it was right and proper then, and I suppose these fellows do here. Only, somehow, it hurts. I—I guess I'm getting older. I can't appreciate these things as I used to. After all, what is there to it? There's too much class feeling and exaggerated notion about one's importance. It isn't a man's game—though it may lead to it. I'd rather be out—standing on my own feet.

"Yes, out playing the game with men—the real game—I want to get more action than this," and he looked across at the college buildings, now almost deserted save for a professor or two, or small groups of students who were wandering about almost as disconsolately as was Joe himself.

"Oh, well!" he concluded. "I'm here, and I've got to stay at least for mother's sake, and I'll do the best I can. I'll grin and bear it. It won't be long until Spring, and then I'll see if I can't make good. I'm glad Weston didn't recognize me. It might have made it worse. But he's bound to know, sooner or later, that I'm the fellow he saw pitch that day, and, if he's like the rest of 'em I suppose he'll have the story all over college. Well, I can't help it." And with this philosophical reflection Joe turned and made his way toward his rooming house.

It was a little farther than he had thought, and he was a bit sorry he had not selected one nearer

the college. There were too many students to permit all of them to dwell in the dormitories proper, and many sought residences in boarding places and in rooming houses, and dined at students' clubs.

"I suppose I'll have to hunt up some sort of an eating joint," mused Joe, as he plodded along. "I'd be glad to get in with some freshmen who like the baseball game. It'll be more sociable. I'll have to be on the lookout."

As he rang the bell of the house corresponding in number to the one he had selected as his rooming place, the door was cautiously opened a trifle, the rattling of a chain showing that it was secure against further swinging. A rather husky voice asked:

"Well?"

Joe looked, and saw himself being regarded by a pair of not very friendly eyes, while a tousled head of hair was visible in the light from a hall lamp that streamed from behind it.

"I—er—I believe I'm to room here," went on Joe. "Matson is my name. I'm a Freshman——"

"Oh, that's all right. Come in!" and the tone was friendly at once. "I thought it was some of those sneaking Sophs., so I had the chain on. Come in!" and the portal was thrown wide, while Joe's hand was caught in a firm grip.

"Are you—er—do you run this place?" asked Joe.

"Not yet, but I'm going to do my best at it as soon as I get wise to the ropes. You can help—you look the right stuff."

"Aren't you the—er—the proprietor?" asked our hero, rather puzzled for the right word.

"Not exactly," was the reply, "but I'm going to be one of 'em soon. Hanover is my name—Ricky Hanover they used to call me at Tampa. I'll allow you the privilege. I'm a Fresh. like yourself. I'm going to room here. Arrived yesterday. I've got a room on the first floor, near the door, and it's going to be so fruity for those Sophs. to rout me out that I got a chain and put it on. The old man said he didn't care."

"The old man?" queried Joe.

"Yes, Hopkins, Hoppy for short—the fellow that owns this place—he and his wife."

"Oh, yes, the people from whom I engaged my room," spoke Joe understandingly. "I think I'm on the second floor," he went on.

"Wrong guess—come again," said Ricky Hanover with a grin, as he carefully replaced the chain. "There's been a wing shift, so Mrs. Hoppy told me. She's expecting you, but she's put you downstairs, in a big double room next to mine. Hope you won't mind. Your trunk is there, and your

valise just came—at least I think it's yours—J. M. on it."

"Yes, that's mine."

"I had it put in for you."

"Thanks."

"Come on, and I'll show you the ropes. If those Sophs. come——"

"Are they likely to?" asked Joe, scenting the joy of a battle thus early in his career.

"They might. Someone tried to rush the door just before you came, but the chain held and I gave 'em the merry ha-ha! But they'll be back—we'll get ours and we'll have to take it."

"I suppose so. Well, I don't mind. I've been through it before."

"That so? Where are you from?"

"Excelsior Hall."

"Never heard of it. That's nothing. I don't s'pose you could throw a stone and hit Tampa School?"

"Probably not," laughed Joe, forming an instinctive liking for this new chap.

"Right. Tampa hardly knows it's on the map, but it isn't a half bad place. Ah, here's Mamma Hoppy now. You don't mind if I call you that; do you?" asked Ricky, as a motherly-looking woman advanced down the hall toward the two lads.

"Oh, I guess I've been at this long enough not

to mind a little thing like that," she laughed. "You college men can't bother me as long as you don't do anything worse than that. Let me see, this is——"

"Matson, ma'am," spoke our hero. "Joe Matson. I wrote to you——"

"Oh, yes, I remember. I have quite a number of new boys coming in. I'm sorry, but the room I thought I could let you have isn't available. The ceiling fell to-day, so I have transferred you downstairs. It's a double room, and I may have to put someone in with you. If you think——"

Oh, that's all right," interrupted Joe goodnaturedly, "I don't mind. I'll be glad to have a room-mate."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Hopkins, in relieved tones. "I can't say just now who it will be."

"Never mind!" broke in Ricky. "Have you grubbed?"

'No," replied the newcomer. "I was thinking of going to a restaurant."

"Come along then. I'm with you. I haven't fed my face yet. We'll go down to Glory's place and see the bunch."

Joe recognized the name as that of a famous New Haven resort, much frequented by the college lads, and, while I have not used the real designation, and while I shall use fictitious names for other places connected with the college, those who

know their Yale will have no difficulty in recognizing them.

"Come on to Glory's," went on Ricky. "It's a great joint."

"Wait until I slip on a clean collar," suggested Joe, and a little later he and Ricky were tramping along the streets, now agleam with electric lights, on their way to the famous resort.

It was filled with students, from lordly Seniors, who scarcely noticed those outside of their class, to the timid Freshmen. Joe looked on in undisguised delight. After all, Yale might be more to him than he had anticipated.

"Like to go a rabbit?" suggested Ricky.

"A rabbit?" asked Joe. "I didn't know they were in season?"

"The Welsh variety," laughed Ricky. "They're great with a mug of ale, they say, only I cut out the ale."

"Same here," admitted Joe. "Yes, I'll go one. It's made of cheese, isn't it?"

"And other stuff. Great for making you dream. Come on, this is the Freshmen table over here. I was in this morning."

"Do they have tables for each class."

"They don't—I mean the management doesn't, but I guess it would be as much as your hair was worth to try to buck in where you didn't belong. Know anybody here?"

"Not a soul—wish I did."

"I didn't when I came this morning, but there are some nice fellows at the Red Shack."

"Red Shack?" Joe looked puzzled.

"Yes, that's our hang-out. It's painted red."

"Oh, I see."

"There are a couple of 'em now," went on Ricky, who seemed perfectly at ease in his comparatively new surroundings. He was a lad who made friends easily, Joe decided. "Hi, Heller, plow over here!" Ricky called to a tall lad who was working his way through the throng. "Bring Jones along with you. They're both at our shack," he went on in a low voice to Joe. "Shake hands with Matson—he's one of us chickens," he continued, and he presented the newcomers as though he had known them all their lives.

"You seem at home," remarked Jones, who was somewhat remarkable for his thinness.

"I am—Slim!" exclaimed Ricky. "I say, you don't mind if I call you that; do you?" he asked. "That's what the other fellows do; isn't it?"

"Yes. How'd you guess it?" asked Jones, with a laugh.

"Easy. I'm Ricky—Richard by rights, but I don't like it. Call me Ricky."

"All right, I will," agreed Slim Jones.

"I'm Hank Heller, if you're going in for names," came from the other youth, while Joe had

to admit that his appellation was thus shortened from Joseph.

"Well, now we know each other let's work our jaws on something besides words," suggested Ricky. "Here, do we get waited on, Alphonse?" he called to a passing waiter.

Joe thought he had never been in such a delightful place, nor in such fine company. It was altogether different from life at Excelsior Hall, and though there were scenes that were not always decorous from a strict standpoint, yet Joe realized that he was getting farther out on the sea of life, and must take things as they came. But he resolved to hold a proper rein on himself, and, though deep in his heart he had no real love for college life, he determined to do his best at it.

The meal was a delightful one. New students were constantly coming in, and the place was blue with smoke from many cigars, pipes and cigarettes. Ricky smoked, as did Hank Heller, but Slim Jones confessed that it was a habit he had not yet acquired, in which he was like Joe.

"Say, we're going to have some fun at our joint," declared Ricky on their way back, at a somewhat late hour. "We'll organize an eating club, or join one, and we'll have some sport. We'll be able to stand off the Sophs. better, too, by hanging together. When the Red Shack gets full we'll

do some organizing ourselves. No use letting the Sophs. have everything."

"That's right," agreed Joe.

As they passed along the now somewhat quiet streets they were occasionally hailed by parties of hilarious Sophomores with the command:

"Take off your hats, Freshies!"

They obeyed, perforce, for they did not want to get the name of insurgents thus early in the term.

"Come in and have a talk," invited Ricky, as they entered the rooming house. "It's early yet."

"Guess I'll turn in," confessed Hank. "I'm tired."

"I'll go you for awhile," agreed Slim.

"How about you, Joe?"

"No, I want to unpack a bit. See you in the morning."

"All right. We'll go to chapel together."

As Joe entered his new room, and turned on the light, he saw a figure in one of the beds. For a moment he was startled, having forgotten that he was to share the room with someone. The youth turned over and gazed at Joe.

"Oh!" he exclaimed with a rather pleasant laugh. "I meant to sit up until you came back, to explain, but I guess I fell asleep. Mrs. Hopkins said you had no objections to a partner, and this was the only place available."

"Not at all!" exclaimed Joe cordially. "Glad you came in. It's lonesome rooming alone."

"You're Matson; aren't you?" asked the youth in bed.

"Yes."

"My name is Poole—Burton Poole."

Then, for the first time Joe recognized the lad he had seen standing all alone on the depot platform—the one to whom he had been inclined to speak—but from which impulse he had held himself back.

CHAPTER VIII

AMBITIONS

"SHAKE hands!" exclaimed Joe, as he stepped over to the bed, on which the other raised himself, the clothes draping around him. Then Joe saw how well built his new room-mate was—the muscles of his arms and shoulders standing out, as his pajamas tightened across his chest.

"Glad to know you," greeted Poole. "You are sure you don't mind my butting in?"

"Not at all. Glad of your company. I hate to be alone. I wish you'd come in a bit earlier, and you could have gone down to Glory's with us."

"Wish I had. I've heard of the place, but as a general rule I like a quieter shack to eat."

"Same here," confessed Joe. "We're talking of starting a feeding joint of our own—the Freshmen here—or of joining one. Are you with us?"

"Sure thing. Do you know any of the fellows here?"

"Three—in our shack. I just met them tonight. They seem all to the good."

"Glad to hear it. I'll fill in anywhere I can."

"Well, I'm going to fill in bed—right now!" asserted Joe with a yawn. "I'm dead tired. It's quite a trip from my place, and we've got to go to chapel in the morning."

"That's so. Are you a sound sleeper?"

"Not so very. Why?"

"I am, and I forgot to bring an alarm clock. I always need one to get me up."

"I can fix you," replied Joe. "I've got one that would do in place of a gong in a fire-house. I'll set it going." And from his trunk, after rummaging about a bit, he pulled a large-sized clock, noiseless as to ticking, but with a resonant bell that created such a clamor, when Joe set it to tinkling, that Ricky Hanover came bursting in.

"What's the joke?" he demanded, half undressed. "Let me in on it."

"The alarm clock," explained Joe. "My new chum was afraid he'd be late to chapel. Ricky, let me make you acquainted with Mr. Poole."

"Glad to know you," spoke Ricky. "Got a handle?"

"A what?"

"Nickname. I always think it's easier to get acquainted with a fellow if he's got one. It isn't so stiff."

"Maybe you're right. Well, the fellows back home used to call me 'Spike'."

"What for?" demanded Joe.

"Because my father was in the hardware business."

"I see!" laughed Ricky. "Good enough. Spike suits me. I say, you've got a pretty fair joint here," he went on admiringly. "And some stuff, believe me!" There was envy in his tones as he looked around the room, and noted the various articles Joe was digging out of his trunk—some fencing foils, boxing gloves, a baseball bat and mask, and a number of foreign weapons which Joe had begun to collect in one of his periodical fits and then had given up. "They'll look swell stuck around the walls," went on Ricky.

"Yes, it sort of tones up the place, I guess," admitted Joe.

"I've got a lot of flags," spoke Spike. "My trunk didn't come, though. Hope it'll be here tomorrow."

"Then you will have a den!" declared Ricky. "Got any photos?"

"Photos?" queried Joe wonderingly.

"Yes—girls? You ought to see my collection! Some class, believe me; and more than half were free-will offerings," and Ricky drew himself up proudly in his role of a lady-killer.

"Where'd you get the others?" asked Spike.

"Swiped 'em—some I took from my sister. They'll look swell when I get 'em up. Well, I'm

getting chilly!" he added, and it was no wonder, for his legs were partly bare. See you later!" and he slid out of the door.

"Nice chap," commented Joe.

"Rather original," agreed Spike Poole. "I guess he's in the habit of doing things. But say, I'm keeping you up with my talk, I'm afraid."

"I guess it's the other way around," remarked Joe, with a smile.

"No, go ahead, and stick up all the trophies you like. I'll help out to-morrow."

"Oh, well, I guess this'll do for a while," said Joe a little later, when he had partly emptied his trunk. "I think I'll turn in. I don't know how I'll sleep—that Welsh rabbit was a bit more than I'm used to. So if I see my grandmother in the night——"

"I'll wake you up before the dear old lady gets a chance to box your ears," promised his roommate with a laugh. And then our hero crawled into bed to spend his first night as a real Yale student.

Joe thought he had never seen so perfect a day as the one to which the alarm clock awakened him some hours later. It was clear and crisp, and on the way to chapel with the others of the Red Shack, he breathed deep of the invigorating air. The exercises were no novelty to him, but it was very different from those at Excelsior Hall, and

later the campus seemed to be fairly alive with the students. But Joe no longer felt alone. He had a chum—several of them, in fact, for the acquaintances of the night before seemed even closer in the morning.

The duties of the day were soon over, lectures not yet being under way. Joe got his name down, learned when he was expected to report, the hours of recitation, and other details. His new chums did the same.

"And now let's see about that eating club," proposed Ricky Hanover, when they were free for the rest of the day." It's all right to go to Glory's once in a while—especially at night when the jolly crowd is there, and a restaurant isn't bad for a change—but we're not here for a week or a month, and we want some place that's a bit like home."

The others agreed with him, and a little investigation disclosed an eating resort run by a Junior who was working his way through Yale. It was a quiet sort of a place, on a quiet street, not so far away from the Red Shack as to make it inconvenient to go around for breakfast. The patrons of it, besides Joe and his new friends, were mostly Freshmen, though a few Juniors, acquaintances of Roslyn Joyce, who was trying to pay his way to an education by means of it, ate there, as

did a couple of very studious Seniors, who did not go in for the society or sporting life.

"This'll be just the thing for us," declared Joe; and the others agreed with him.

There was some talk of football in the air. All about them students were discussing the chances of the eleven, especially in the big games with Harvard and Princeton, and all agreed that, with the new material available, Yale was a sure winner.

"What are you going in for?" asked Joe of Ricky, as the five of them—Joe, Ricky, Spike, Slim Jones and Hank Heller strolled across the campus.

"The eleven for mine—if I can make it!" declared Ricky. "What's yours, Joe?"

"Baseball. But it's a long while off."

"That's right—the gridiron has the call just now. Jove, how I want to play!" and Ricky danced about in the excess of his good spirits.

"What are you going in for?" asked Joe of Hank Heller.

"I'd like to make the crew, but I don't suppose I have much chance. I'll have to wait, as you will."

"If I can get on the glee club, I'm satisfied," remarked Slim Jones. "That's about all I'm fit for," he added, with a whimsical smile. "How about you, Spike? Can you play anything?"

"The Jewsharp and mouthorgan. Have they any such clubs here?"

"No!" exclaimed Ricky. "But what's the matter with you trying for the eleven? You've got the build."

"It isn't in my line. I'm like Joe here. I like the diamond best."

"Do you?" cried our hero, delighted to find that his room-mate had the same ambition as himself. "Where do you play?"

"Well, I have been catching for some time."

"Then you and Joe ought to hit it off!" exclaimed Ricky. "Joe's crazy to pitch, and you two can make up a private battery, and use the room for a cage."

CHAPTER IX

THE SHAMPOO

FOOTBALL was in the air. On every side was the talk of it, and around the college, on the streets leading to the gridiron, and in the cars that took the students out there to watch the practice, could be heard little else but snatches of conversation about "punts" and "forward passes," the chances for this end or that fullback—how the Bulldog sized up against Princeton and Harvard.

Of course Joe was interested in this, and he was among the most loyal supporters of the team, going out to the practice, and cheering when the 'varsity made a touchdown against the luckless scrub.

"We're going to have a great team!" declared Ricky, as he walked back from practice with Joe one day.

"I'm sure I hope so," spoke our hero. "Have you had a chance?"

"Well, I'm one of the subs, and I've reported every day. They kept us tackling the dummy for

quite a while, and I think I got the eye of one of the coaches. But there are so many fellows trying, and such competition, that I don't know—it's a fierce fight," and Ricky sighed.

"Never mind," consoled Joe. "You'll make good, I'm sure. I'll have my troubles when the baseball season opens. I guess it won't be easy to get on the nine."

"Well, maybe not, if you insist on being pitcher," said Ricky. "I hear that Weston, who twirled last season, is in line for it again."

"Weston—does he pitch?" gasped Joe. It was the first time he had heard—or thought to ask—what position the lad held who had sneered at him.

"That's his specialty," declared Ricky. "They're depending on him for the Yale-Princeton game. Princeton took the odd game last year, and we want it this."

"I hope we get it," murmured Joe. "And so Ford Weston pitches; eh? If it comes to a contest between us I'm afraid it will be a bitter one. He hates me already. I guess he thinks I've got a swelled head."

"Say, look here, Joe!" exclaimed Ricky, with a curious look on his face, "you don't seem to know the ropes here. You're a Freshman, you know."

"Sure I know that. What of it?"

"Lots. You know that you haven't got the ghost of a show to be pitcher on the 'varsity; don't you?"

"Know it? Do you mean that Weston can so work things as to keep me off?"

"Not Weston; no. But the rules themselves are against you. It's utterly impossible that you should pitch this year."

"Why? What rules? I didn't know I was ineligible."

"Well, you are. Listen, Joe. Under the intercollegiate rules no Freshman can play on the 'varsity baseball nine, let alone being the pitcher."

"He can't?" and Joe stood aghast.

"No. It's out of the question. I supposed you knew that or I'd have mentioned it before."

Joe was silent a moment. His heart seemed almost to stop beating. He felt as though the floor of the room was sinking from under his feet.

"I—I never thought to ask about rules," said Joe, slowly. "I took it for granted that Yale was like other smaller universities—that any fellow could play on the 'varsity if he could make it."

"Not at Yale, or any of the big universities," went on Ricky in softened tones, for he saw that Joe was much affected. "You see the rule was adopted to prevent the ringing in of a semi-professional, who might come here for a few months, qualify as a Freshman, and play on the 'varsity.

You've got to be a Sophomore, at least, before you can hope to make the big team, and then of course, it's up to you to make a fight for the pitcher's box."

Once more Joe was silent. His hopes had been suddenly crushed, and, in a measure, it was his own fault, for he had taken too much for granted. He felt a sense of bitterness—bitterness that he had allowed himself to be persuaded to come to Yale against his own wishes.

And yet he knew that it would never have done to have gone against his parents. They had their hearts set on a college course for him.

"Hang it all!" exclaimed Joe, as he paced up and down, "why didn't I think to make some inquiries?"

"It would have been better," agreed Ricky. "But there's no great harm done. You can play on the Freshman team this coming season, and then, when you're a Soph, you can go on that team, and you'll be in line for the 'varsity. You can play on the Junior team, if you like, and they have some smashing good games once in a while."

"But it isn't the 'varsity," lamented Joe.

"No. But look here, old man; you've got to take things as they come. I don't want to preach, but——"

"That's all right—slam it into me!" exclaimed Joe. "I need it—I deserve it. It'll do me good.

I won't be so cock-sure next time. But I hoped to make the 'varsity this season."

"It'll be better for you in the end not to have done so," went on his friend. "You need more practice, than you have had, to take your place on the big team. A season with the Freshmen will give it to you. You'll learn the ropes better—get imbued with some of the Yale spirit, and you'll be more of a man. It's no joke, I tell you, to pitch on the 'varsity."

"No, I imagine not," agreed Joe, slowly. "Then, I suppose there's no use of me trying to even get my name down on a sort of waiting list."

"Not until you see how you make out on the Freshman team," agreed Ricky. "You'll be watched there, so look out for yourself. The old players, who act as coaches, are always on the lookout for promising material. You'll be sized up when you aren't expecting it. And, not only will they watch to see how you play ball, but how you act under all sorts of cross-fire, and in emergencies. It isn't going to be any cinch."

"No, I can realize that," replied Joe. "And so Weston has been through the mill, and made good?"

"He's been through the mill, that's sure enough," agreed Ricky, "but just how good he's made will have to be judged later. He wasn't such a wonder last season."

"There's something queer about him," said Joe.

"How's that?"

"Why, if he's only a Soph this year he must have been a Freshman last. And yet he pitched on the 'varsity I understand."

"Weston's is a peculiar case," said Ricky. "I heard some of the fellows discussing it. He's classed as a Soph, but he ought really to be a Junior. This is his third year here. He's a smart chap in some things, but he got conditioned in others, and in some studies he is still taking the Soph lectures, while in others he is with the Juniors. He was partly educated abroad, it seems, and that put him ahead of lots of us in some things. So, while he was rated with the Freshmen in some studies last year, he was enough of a Sophomore to comply with the intercollegiate rules, and pitch on the 'varsity. He did well, so they said."

"I wish fate handed me out something like that," mused Joe. "If I had known that I'd have boned away on certain things so as to get a Sophomore rating—at least enough to get on the big nine."

"Why, don't you intend to stay at Yale?" asked Ricky. "A year soon passes. You'll be a Sophomore before you know it."

"I wish I was in Weston's shoes," said Joe softly.

Since that meeting on the campus, when the Sophomore had not recognized Joe, the two had not encountered each other, and Joe was glad enough of it.

"I'm glad I didn't meet him in Riverside," thought Joe. "It won't make it so hard here—when it comes to a showdown. For I'm going to make the nine! The 'varsity nine; if not this year, then next!" and he shut his teeth in determination.

Meanwhile matters were gradually adjusting themselves to the new conditions of affairs at Yale—at least as regards Joe and the other Freshmen. The congenial spirits in the Red Shack, increased by some newcomers, had, in a measure, "found" themselves. Recitations and lectures began their regular routine, and though some of the latter were "cut," and though often in the interests of football the report of "not prepared" was made, still on the whole Joe and his chums did fairly well.

Joe, perhaps because of his lack of active interest in football, as was the case with his roommate, Spike, did better than the others as regards lessons. Yet it did not come easy to Joe to buckle down to the hard and exacting work of a college

course, as compared to the rather easy methods in vogue at Excelsior Hall.

Joe was not a natural student, and to get a certain amount of comparatively dry knowledge into his head required hours of faithful work.

"I'm willing to make a try of it—for the sake of the folks," he confided to Spike; "but I know I'm never going to set the river on fire with classics or math. I'm next door to hating them. I want to play baseball."

"Well, I can't blame you—in a way," admitted his chum. "Of course baseball isn't all there is to life, though I do like it myself."

"It's going to be my business in life," said Joe simply, and Spike realized then, if never before, the all-absorbing hold the great game had on his friend. To Joe baseball was as much of a business—or a profession if you like—as the pulpit was to a divinity student, or the courts to a member of the law school.

The Yale football team began its triumphant career, and the expectations of the friends of the eleven were fully realized. To his delight Ricky played part of a game, and there was no holding him afterward.

"I've got a chance to buck the Princeton tiger!" he declared. "The head coach said I did well!"

"Good!" cried Joe, wondering if he would

have such fine luck when the baseball season started.

Affairs at the Red Shack went on smoothly, and at the Mush and Milk Club, which the Freshmen had dubbed their eating joint, there were many assemblings of congenial spirits. Occasionally there was a session at Glory's—a session that lasted far into the night—though Joe and his room-mate did not hold forth at many such.

"It's bad for the head the next day," declared Spike, and he was strictly abstemious in his habits, as was Joe. But not all the crowd at the Red Shack were in this class, and often there were disturbances at early hours of the morning—college songs howled under the windows with more or less "harmony," and appeals to Joe and the others to "stick out their heads."

"I think we'll get ours soon," spoke Spike one night, as he and Joe sat at the centre table of the room, studying.

"Our what?"

"Drill. I heard that a lot of the Freshmen were caught down the street this evening and made to walk Spanish. They're beginning the shampoo, too."

"The shampoo—what's that?"

"An ancient and honorable Yale institution, in which the candidate is head-massaged with a bucket of paste or something else."

"Paste or what?"

"You're allowed your choice, I believe. Paste for mine, it's easier to get out of your hair if you take it in time."

"That's right. I'm with you—but—er—how about a fight?"

"It's up to you. Lots of the Freshmen stand 'em off. It's allowed if you like."

"Then I say—fight!" exclaimed Joe. "I'm not going to be shampooed in that silly fashion if I can help it."

"Then we'll stand 'em off?" questioned Spike.

"Sure—as long as we can," declared Joe. "Though if they bring too big a bunch against us we'll probably get the worst of it."

"Very likely, but we can have the satisfaction of punching some of the Sophs. I'm with you."

"Where'll they do it?"

"No telling. They may catch us on the street, or they may come here. For choice——"

Spike paused and held up his hand for silence. There was a noise in the hall, in the direction of the front door. Then came the voice of Ricky Hanover saying:

"No, you don't! I've got the bulge on you! No monkey business here!"

"Get away from that door, Fresh!" shouted someone, half-angrily; "or we'll bust it in!"

"Give him the shampoo—both of 'em!" yelled another.

"You don't get in here!" cried Ricky. "I say——"

His voice was drowned out in a crash, and a moment later there was the sound of a struggle.

"Here they come," said Spike in a low voice.

"Let's take off our coats," proposed Joe, in the same tone. "If we're going to fight I want to be ready."

CHAPTER X

A WILD NIGHT

"Say, Ricky is sure putting up a great fight!"

"Yes, and he's as wiry as they make 'em!"

"He'll make 'em wish they'd let him alone—maybe."

"And maybe not," returned Spike. He and Joe had passed these remarks after a grim silence, followed by a resumption of the crashing struggle in the hall near the front door. "There are too many of 'em for him," went on Joe's room-mate.

"Wait until I take a peep," proposed the young pitcher. He advanced to the door, rolling up his sleeves as he went.

"Don't!" snapped Spike. "They'll be here soon enough as it is, without us showing ourselves. I'd just as soon they'd pass us up this trip—it's an unpleasant mess."

"That's right. Maybe we can stand 'em off."

"No such luck. I think they're coming."

The noise in the hall seemed redoubled. Ricky could be heard expostulating, and from that he changed to threats.

"I'll make you wish you hadn't tried this on me!" he shouted. "I'll punch——"

"Oh, dry up!" commanded someone.

"Stuff some of that paste in his mouth!" ordered another voice.

"A double shampoo for being too fresh!"

"No, you don't! I won't stand——"

"Then take it lying down. Here we go, boys!"

"I—Oh——" and Ricky's voice trailed off into an indistinct murmur.

"He's getting his," said Spike in a low tone.

"And I guess here is where we get ours," said Joe, as the rush of feet sounded along the corridor, while someone called:

"Come on, fellows. More work for us down here. There are some of the Freshies in their burrows. Rout 'em out! Smash 'em up!"

The tramping of feet came to a pause outside the door of our two friends.

"Open up!" came the command.

"Come in!" invited Joe. They had not turned the key as they did not want the lock broken.

Into the room burst a nondescript horde of students. They were wild and disheveled, some with torn coats and trousers, others with neckties and collars missing, or else hanging in shreds about their necks.

"Ricky put up a game fight!" murmured Joe.

"He sure did," agreed Spike.

"Hello, Freshmen!" greeted the leader of the Sophomores. "Ready for yours?"

"Sure," answered Spike with as cheerful a grin as he could muster.

"Any time you say," added Joe.

"The beggars were expecting us!" yelled a newcomer, crowding into the room.

"Going to fight?" demanded someone.

"Going to try," said Joe coolly.

"Give 'em theirs!" was the yell.

"What'll it be—paste or mush?"

Joe saw that several of the Sophomores carried pails, one seemingly filled with froth, and the other with a white substance. Neither would be very pleasant when rubbed into the hair.

"Maybe you'd better cut 'em both out," suggested Joe.

"Not on your life! Got to take your medicine, kid!" declared a tall Sophomore. He made a grab for Joe, who stepped back. Someone swung at our hero, who, nothing daunted, dashed a fist into his antagonist's face, and the youth went down with a crash, taking a chair with him.

"Oh, ho! Fighters!" cried a new voice. "Slug 'em, Sophs!"

Joe swung around, and could not restrain a gasp of astonishment, for, confronting him was Ford Weston, the 'varsity pitcher. On his part Weston seemed taken aback.

"GIVE 'EM THEIR'S!" WAS THE YELL.

"Jove!" he cried. "It's the little country rooster I saw pitch ball. So you came to Yale after all?"

"I did," answered Joe calmly. It was the first he had met his rival face to face since that time on the campus when Weston had not known him.

"Well, we're going to make you sorry right now," sneered Weston. "Up boys, and at 'em!"

"Let me get another whack at him!" snarled the lad Joe had knocked down.

There was a rush. Joe, blindly striking out, felt himself pulled, hauled and mauled. Once he went down under the weight of numbers, but he fought himself to a kneeling position and hit out with all his force. He was hit in turn.

He had a glimpse of Spike hurling a tall Sophomore half way across the room, upon the sofa with a crash. Then with a howl the second-year men closed in on the two Freshmen again.

Joe saw Weston coming for him, aiming a vicious blow at his head. Instinctively Joe ducked, and with an uppercut that was more forceful than he intended he caught the pitcher on the jaw.

Weston went backward, and only for the fact that he collided with one of his mates would have fallen. He clapped his hand to his jaw, and as he glared at Joe he cried:

"I'll settle with you for this!"

"Any time," gasped Joe, and then his voice

was stopped as someone's elbow caught him in the jaw.

"Say, what's the matter with you fellows?" demanded a voice in the doorway. "Can't you do up two Freshmen? Come on, give 'em what's coming and let's get out of this. There's been too much of a row, and we've got lots to do yet tonight. Eat 'em up!"

Thus urged by someone who seemed to be a leader, the Sophomores went at the attack with such fury that there was no withstanding them. The odds were too much for Joe and Spike, and they were borne down by the weight of numbers.

Then, while some of their enemies held them, others smeared the paste over their heads, rubbing it well in. It was useless to struggle, and all the two Freshmen could do was to protect their eyes.

"That's enough," came the command.

"No, it isn't!" yelled a voice Joe recognized as that of Weston. "Where's that mush?"

"No! No!" expostulated several. "They've had enough—the paste was enough."

"I say no!" fairly screamed Weston. "Hand it here!"

He snatched something from one of his mates, and the next instant Joe felt a stream of liquid mush drenching him. It ran into his eyes, smarting them grievously, and half blinding him. With

a mad struggle he tore himself loose and struck out, but his fists only cleaved the empty air.

"Come on!" was the order.

There was a rush of feet, and presently the room cleared.

"Next time don't be so—fresh!" came tauntingly from Weston, as he followed his mates.

"Water—water!" begged Joe, for his eyes seemed on fire.

"Hold on, old man—steady," came from Spike. "What is it?"

"Something in my eyes. I can't see!"

"The paste and mush I expect. Rotten trick. Wait a minute and I'll sponge you off. Oh, but we're sights!"

Presently Joe felt the cooling liquid, and the pain went from him. He could open his eyes and look about. Their room was in disorder, but, considering the fierceness of the scrimmage, little damage had been done.

But the lads themselves, when they glanced at each other, could not repress woeful expressions, followed by laughs of dismay, for truly they were in a direful plight. Smeared with paste that made their hair stand up like the quills of a fretful porcupine, their shirts streaked with it, they were indeed weird looking objects. Paste was on their faces, half covering their noses. It stuffed up

their ears and their eyes stared out from a mask of it like burned holes in a blanket.

"Oh, but you are a sight!" exclaimed Spike.

"The same to you and more of it," retorted Joe. "Let's get this off."

"Sure, before it hardens, or we'll never get it off," agreed Spike.

Fortunately there was plenty of water in their room, and, stripping to their waists they scrubbed to such good advantage that they were soon presentable. The removal of their coats and vests had saved those garments.

"They went for you fierce," commented Spike. "Who was that fellow who came in last?"

"Weston—'varsity pitcher."

"He had it in for you."

"Seemed so, but I don't know why," and Joe related the little scene the day of the Silver Star-Resolute game.

"Oh, well, don't mind him. I say, let's go out."

"What for?"

"It's going to be a wild night from the way it's begun. Let's see some of the fun. No use trying to study, I'm too excited."

"I'm excited too. But if we go out they may pitch onto us again."

"No, we can claim immunity. I want to see some of the other fellows get theirs. We'll get Ricky and the other bunch and have some fun."

"All right; I'm with you."

They dressed, and, having made their room somewhat presentable, they called for Ricky. He was busy trying to get rid of his shampoo, which had been unusually severe. He readily fell in with the notion of going out, and with Hank Heller and Slim Jones in the party the five set out.

They swung out into Wall street, up College, and cut over Elm street to the New Haven Green, where they knew all sorts of tricks would be going on. For the Sophomores had started their hazing in earnest.

It was indeed a wild night. The streets about the college buildings were thronged with students, and yells and class-rallying cries were heard on every side.

"Let's go over to High street," proposed Joe, and they ran up Temple, to Chapel, and thence over to High, making their way through throngs. Several times they were halted by groups of Sophomores, with commands to do some absurdity, but an assertion that they had been shampooed, with the particulars, and the evidence yet remaining in spots, was enough to cause them to be passed.

High street was filled with even a greater crowd as they reached it, a party of Freshman pouring out from the college campus endeavoring to escape from pursuing enemies.

Through Library street to York they went, with shouts, yells and noises of rattles and other sound-producing instruments.

"Let's follow and see what happens," proposed Ricky. "I want to see some other fellow get his as long as I had mine."

Just then Joe saw several figures come quietly out from behind a building and start up York street, in an opposite direction from that taken by the throng. Under the glare of an electric light he recognized Weston and some of the crowd who had shampooed them. Some sudden whim caused Joe to say:

"There's the fellows who shampooed us. Let's follow and maybe we can get back at 'em. There are only five—that's one apiece."

"Right you are!" sang out Ricky. "I want to punch someone."

"Come on then," signalled Spike. "I'm out for the night. It's going to be a wild one all right."

And truly it seemed so.

CHAPTER XI

THE RED PAINT

PURSUING those who had given them the shampoo, Joe and his chums found themselves trailing down a side street in the darkness.

"I wonder what they're up to," ventured Spike.

"Oh, some more monkey business," declared Ricky. "If they try it on any more Freshmen though, we'll take a hand ourselves; eh?"

"Sure," assented the others.

"There they go—around the corner—and on the run!" suddenly exclaimed Slim Jones. "Get a move on!"

Our friends broke into a trot—that is, all but Joe. He tried to, but stepping on a stone it rolled over with him, and he felt a severe pain shoot through his ankle.

"Sprained, by Jove!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad it isn't the baseball season, for I'm going to be laid up."

He halted, and in those few seconds his companions, eager in the chase, drew ahead of him

in the darkness, and disappeared around another corner.

"I can't catch up to 'em," decided Joe. "Wonder if I can step on the foot?"

He tried his weight on it, and to his delight found that it was not a bad sprain, rather a severe wrench that, while it lamed him, still allowed him to walk.

"Guess I'll go back," he murmured. "If there's a row I can't hold up my end, and there's no use being a handicap. I'll go back and turn in. I can explain later."

He turned about, walking slowly, the pain seeming to increase rather than diminish, and he realized that he was in for a bad time.

"If I could see a hack I'd hail it," he thought, but the streets seemed deserted, no public vehicles being in sight. "I've got to tramp it out," Joe went on. "Well, I can take it slow."

His progress brought him to Wall street, and he decided to continue along that to Temple, and thence to the modest side-thoroughfare on which the Red Shack was located. But he was not destined to reach it without further adventures.

As he came around a corner he heard the murmur of low voices, and, being cautious by nature, he halted to take an observation.

"If it's my own crowd—all right," he said.

"But if it's a lot of Sophs, I don't want to run into 'em."

He listened, and from among those whom he could not see he heard the murmur of voices.

"That's the house over there," said someone.

"Right! Now we'll see if he'll double on me just because I wasn't prepared. I'll make him walk Spanish!"

"Got plenty of the magoozilum?"

"Sure. We'll daub it on thick."

"They can't be after Freshmen," mused Joe. "I wonder what's up?"

He looked across the street in the direction where, evidently, the unseen ones were directing their attention.

"A lot of the profs. live there," mused Joe. "I have it! Some one's going to play a trick on 'em to get even. I'll just pipe it off!"

He had not long to wait. Out of the shadows stole two figures, and, even in the dimness he recognized one of them as Ford Weston. The other he did not know.

"Come on!" hoarsely whispered the 'varsity pitcher to his chum. "I'll spread it on thick and then we'll cut for it. Separate streets. I'll see you in the morning, but keep mum, whatever happens."

The two figures ran silently across the street, and paused in front of a detached house. One

seemed to be actively engaged at the steps for a few minutes, and then both quickly ran off again, the two separating and diving down side streets.

"Huh! Whatever it was didn't take them long," thought Joe. "I wonder what it was? Guess I'll——"

But his half-formed resolution to make an investigation was not carried out. He heard shouting down the street, and thinking it might be a crowd of Sophomores, he decided to continue on to his room.

"They might start a rough-house with me," mused Joe, "and then my ankle would be more on the blink than ever. I'll go home."

He started off, rather excited over the events of the night, and found that even his brief spell of standing still had stiffened him so that he could hardly proceed.

"Wow!" he exclaimed, as a particularly sharp twinge shot through him. He had gone about two blocks when he heard someone coming behind him. He turned in apprehension, but saw only a single figure.

"Hello! What's the matter?" asked a young man as he caught up to Joe.

"Twisted my ankle."

"So? What's your name?"

"Matson—I'm a Freshman."

"Oh, yes. I think I saw you at Chapel. Ken-

dall's my name." Joe recognized it as that of one of the Juniors and a member of the 'varsity nine. "How'd it happen?"

"Oh, skylarking. The Sophs. were after us to-night."

"So I heard. You'd better do something for that foot," he went on, as he noticed Joe's limp.

"I going to as soon as I get to my room."

"Say, I tell you what," went on Kendall. "My joint's just around the corner, and I've got a prime liniment to rub on. Suppose you come in and I'll give you some."

"Glad to," agreed Joe. "I don't believe I've got a bit at my shack, and the drug stores are all closed."

"Come along then—here, lean on me," and Kendall proffered his arm, for which Joe was grateful.

"Here we are," announced Kendall a little later, as they turned into a building where some of the wealthier students had their rooms. "Sorry it's up a flight."

"Oh, I can make it," said Joe, keeping back an exclamation of pain that was on his lips.

"We'll just have a look at it," continued his new friend. "I've known a strain like that to last a long while if not treated properly. A little rubbing at the right time does a lot of good."

Joe looked in delight at the room of his newly

found friend. It was tastefully, and even richly, furnished, but with a quiet atmosphere differing from the usual college apartment.

"You've got a nice place here," he remarked, thinking that, after all, there might be more to Yale life than he had supposed.

"Oh, it'll do. Here's the stuff. Now off with your shoe and we'll have a look at that ankle. I'm a sort of doctor—look after the football lads sometimes. Are you trying for the eleven?"

"No, baseball is my stunt."

"Yes? So's mine."

"You catch, don't you?" asked Joe. "I've heard of 'Shorty' Kendall."

"That's me," came with a laugh. "Oh, that's not so bad," he went on as he looked at Joe's foot. "A little swelled. Here, I'll give it a rub," and in spite of Joe's half-hearted protests he proceeded to massage the ankle until it felt much better.

"Try to step on it," directed Shorty Kendall.

Joe did so, and found that he could bear his weight on it with less pain.

"I guess you'll do," announced the Junior. "Cut along to your room now—or say—hold on, I can fix you up here for the night. I've got a couch——"

"No, thank you," expostulated Joe. "The boys would worry if I didn't come back."

"You could send word——"

"No, I'll trot along. Much obliged."

"Take that liniment with you," directed Kendall.

"Won't you need it?"

"Not until the diamond season opens, and that's some time off yet. Good night—can you make the stairs?"

"Yes—don't bother to come down," and Joe limped out.

As he reached the first hall he was made aware that someone was coming in the front door. Before he could reach it the portal opened and a student hurried in, making for a room near the main entrance. In the glare of the hall light Joe saw that the youth was Ford Weston.

He also saw something else. On Weston's hand was a red smear—brilliant—scarlet. At first Joe thought it was blood, but a slight odor in the air told him it was paint.

An instant later his eyes met those of the rival pitcher—at least Joe hoped to make him a rival—and Weston started. Then he thrust his smeared hand into his pocket, and, without a word, hurried into his room and slammed the door.

CHAPTER XII

JOE'S SILENCE

"RATHER queer," mused Joe, after a moment's silence. "I wonder he didn't say something to me after what happened. So he rooms here? It's a great shack. I suppose if I stay here the full course I'll be in one of these joints. But I don't believe I'm going to stay. If I get a chance on the 'varsity nine next year and make good—then a professional league for mine."

He limped out of the dormitory, and the pain in his ankle made him keenly aware of the fact that if he did not attend to it he might be lame for some time.

"Red paint," he murmured as he let himself out. "I wonder what Weston was doing with it? Could he—— Oh, I guess it's best not to think too much in cases like this."

He reached his rooming place and trod along the hall, his injured foot making an uneven staccato tattoo on the floor.

"Well, what happened to you?"

"Where did you hike to?"

"Were you down to Glory's all by your lonesome?"

"What'd you give us the slip for?"

"Come on; give an account of yourself."

These were only a few of the greetings that welcomed him as he entered his apartment to find there, snugly ensconced on the beds, chair, sofa and table, his own room-mate and the other friends who had gone out that wild night.

"What's the matter?" demanded Spike, in some alarm, as he saw his friend limping.

"Oh, nothing much. Twisted ankle. I'll be all right in the morning. How did you fellows make out?"

"Nothing doing," said Ricky. "The boobs that shampooed us split after we got on their trail, and we lost 'em. Did you see anything of 'em?"

"Not much," said Joe, truthfully enough.

"Then where did you go?"

He explained how he had twisted on his ankle, and turned back, and how, in coming home, he had met Kendall. He said nothing of watching Weston and another chap do something to the stoop of the unknown professor's house.

"Mighty white of Kendall," was Spike's opinion, and it was voiced by all.

"Oh, what a night!" exclaimed Slim Jones. "Home was never like this!"

"Well, you fellows can sit up the rest of the night if you want to," said Joe, after a pause; "but I'm going to put my foot to bed."

"I guess that's the best place for all of us," agreed Ricky. "Come on, fellows; I have got some hard practice to-morrow. I may be called to the 'varsity."

"Like pie!" jeered Slim Jones.

"Oh, ho! Don't you worry," taunted Ricky. "I'll make it."

There was a sensation the next morning. It seemed that a well-known and very literary professor, returning from a lecture from out of town, before a very learned society, had slipped and fallen on his own front porch, going down in some greasy red paint that had been smeared over the steps.

The professor had sprained a wrist, and his clothing had been soiled, but this was not the worst of it. He had taken with him, on his lecture, some exceedingly rare and valuable Babylonian manuscripts to enhance his talk, and, in his fall these parchments had scattered from his portfolio, and several of them had been projected into the red paint, being ruined thereby. And, as the manuscripts had been taken from the Yale library, the loss was all the more keen.

"I say, Joe, did you hear the news?" gasped

Ricky, as he rushed into his friend's room, just before the chapel call.

"No. Is there a row over the shampooing?"

"Shampooing nothing! It's red paint, and some of those musty manuscripts that a prof. had," and he poured out the tale.

"Red paint?" murmured Joe.

"Yes. There's a fierce row over it, and the Dean has taken it up. If the fellows are found out they'll be expelled sure. Oh, but it was a night! But the red paint was the limit."

Joe did not answer, but in a flash there came to him the scene where Weston had entered his room, thrusting his hand into his pocket—a hand smeared with red.

"Fierce row," went on Ricky, who was a natural reporter, always hearing sensations almost as soon as they happened. "The prof. went sprawling on his steps, not knowing the goo was there and the papers—— Oh me! Oh my! I wonder who did it?"

"Hard to tell I guess," answered Joe, "with the bunch that was out last night."

"That's so. I'm glad it wasn't any of our fellows. We all stuck together—that is all but you——" and, as if struck by a sudden thought, he gazed anxiously at Joe.

"Oh, I can prove an *alibi* all right," laughed the pitcher. "Don't worry."

"Glad of it. Well, let's hike. There goes the bell."

There was indeed a "fierce row," over the spoiling of the rare manuscripts, and the Dean himself appealed to the honor of the students to tell, if they knew, who the guilty one was.

But Joe Matson kept silent.

There was an investigation, of course, but it was futile, for nothing of moment was disclosed.

It was several days later when Joe, strolling across the college campus after a lecture, came face to face with Weston. For a moment they stood staring at one another.

The hot blood welled up into the cheeks of the 'varsity pitcher, and he seemed to be trying to hide his hand—the hand that had held the red smear. Then, without a word, he passed on.

And Joe Matson still maintained his silence.

The Fall passed. The Yale eleven swept on to a glorious championship. The Christmas vacation came and went and Joe spent happy days at home. He was beginning to be more and more a Yale man and yet—there was something constrained in him. His parents noticed it.

"I—I don't think Joe is very happy," ventured Clara, after he had gone back to college.

"Happy—why not?" challenged her mother.

"Oh, I don't know. He hasn't said much about baseball."

"Baseball!" chuckled Mr. Matson, as he looked out of the window at the wintry New England landscape. "This is sleigh-riding weather—not baseball."

"Oh, I do wish Joe would give up his foolish idea," sighed Mrs. Matson. "He can never make anything of himself at baseball. A minister now, preaching to a large congregation——"

"I guess, mother, if you'd ever been to a big ball game, and seen thousands of fans leaning over their seats while the pitcher got ready to deliver a ball at a critical point in the contest, you'd think he had some congregation himself," said Mr. Matson, with another chuckle.

"Oh, well, what's the use talking to you?" demanded his wife; and there the subject was dropped.

Joe went back to Yale. He was doing fairly well in his lessons, but not at all brilliantly. Study came hard to him. He was longing for the Spring days and the green grass of the diamond.

Gradually the talk turned from debating clubs, from glees and concerts, to baseball. The weather raged and stormed, but there began to be the hint of mildness in the wintry winds.

In various rooms lads began rummaging through trunks and valises, getting out old gloves that needed mending. The cage in the gymnasium was wheeled out and some repairs made to it.

"By Jove!" cried Joe one day, "I—I begin to feel as if I had the spring fever."

"Baseball fever you mean," corrected Spike.

"It's the same thing, old man."

Jimmie Lee, a little Freshman who roomed not far from Joe's shack, came bursting in a little later.

"Hurray!" he yelled, slapping our hero on the back. "Heard the news?"

"What news?" asked Spike. "Have you been tapped for Skull and Bones, or Wolf's Head?"

"Neither, you old iconoclast. But the notice is up."

"What notice?"

"Baseball candidates are to report in the gym. to-morrow afternoon. Hurray!" and he dealt Spike a resounding blow.

Joe Matson's eyes sparkled.

CHAPTER XIII

EARLY PRACTICE

"WHAT are you going to try for?"

"Have you played much before you came here?"

"Oh, rats! I don't believe I'll have any show with all this bunch!"

"Hey, quit shoving; will you?"

"Oh, Rinky-Dink! Over here!"

"Hi, Weston, we're looking for you."

"There goes Shorty Kendall. He'll sure catch this year."

"Hello, Mac! Think you'll beat Weston to it this year?"

"I might," was the cool reply.

The above were only a few of the many challenges, shouts, calls and greetings that were bandied from side to side as the students, who had been waiting long for this opportunity, crowded into the gymnasium.

It was the preliminary sifting and weeding out of the mass of material offered on the altar of

baseball. At best but a small proportion of the candidates could hope to make the 'varsity, or even a class team, but this did not lessen the throng that crowded about the captain, manager and coaches, eagerly waiting for favorable comment.

"Well, we're here!" exulted Jimmie Lee, who had, the night before, brought to Joe the good news that the ball season had at least started to open.

"Yes, we're here," agreed Joe.

"And what will happen to us?" asked Spike Poole. "It doesn't look to me as if much would."

"Oh, don't fool yourself," declared Jimmie, who, being very lively, had learned many of the ropes, and who, by reason of ferreting about, had secured much information. "The coaches aren't going to let anything good get by 'em. Did you see Benson looking at me! Ahem! And I think I have Whitfield's eye! Nothing like having nerve, is there? Joe, hold up your hand and wriggle it—they're trying to see where you're located," and, with a laugh at his conceit, Jimmie shoved into the crowd trying to get nearer the centre of interest—to wit, where the old players who served as coaches were conferring with the captain.

The latter was Tom Hatfield, a Junior whose remarkable playing at short had won him much

fame. Mr. William Benson and Mr. James Whitfield were two of the coaches. George Farley was the manager, and a short stocky man, with a genial Irish face, who answered to the name of Dick McLeary, was the well-liked trainer.

"Well, if I can make the outfield I suppose I ought to be satisfied," spoke Jimmie Lee. "But I did want to get on a bag, or somewhere inside the diamond."

"I'll take to the daisies and be thankful," remarked Spike; "though I would like to be behind the bat."

"Carrying bats would do me for a starter," spoke a tall lad near Joe. "But I suppose I'll be lucky if they let me play on the Freshman team. Anyhow as long as I don't get left out of it altogether I don't mind. What are you going to try for?" he asked of our hero.

"I would like to pitch. I twirled at Excelsior Hall, and I think I can play on the mound better than anywhere else, though that's not saying I'm such a muchness as a pitcher," added Joe, modestly. "I did hope to get on the 'varsity, but——"

"Pitch!" exclaimed the other frankly. "Say, you've got as much chance to pitch on the 'varsity as I have of taking the Dean's place to-morrow. Pitch on the 'varsity! Say, I'm not saying anything against you, Matson, for maybe you can

pitch, but Weston has the place cinched, and if he falls down there's Harry McAnish, a southpaw. He stands about second choice."

"Oh, I've been disillusioned," said Joe frankly. "I know I can't get on the 'varsity this year. But don't they have more than one pitcher in reserve?"

"Oh, yes, sure. But Bert Avondale comes next, and I have heard that he's even better than Weston, but Weston is steadier—in most games. I don't want to discourage you, but you'd better try for some other place than pitcher."

"No, I'm going to try for there," said Joe in a low voice. "I may not make it, but if I get a chance to show what I can do, and then fall down, I won't kick. I mean next year, of course," he added.

"Oh, you may get a chance all right. Every fellow does at Yale. But you're up against some of the best college baseball material that ever came over the pike. Sometimes I think I've got nerve even to dream of a class team. But listen—they're going to start the fun now."

The manager was speaking, announcing more or less formally, that which everyone knew already—that they had reported to allow a sort of preliminary looking over of the candidates. There were several of the former ball team who would play, it was said, but there was always need

and a chance, for new material. All save Freshmen would be given an opportunity, the manager said, and then he emphasized the need of hard work and training for those who were given the responsibility of carrying the blue of Yale to victory on the diamond.

"And, no less does this responsibility rest on the scrub, or second team," went on Farley. "For on the efficiency of the scrub depends the efficiency of the 'varsity, since good opposition is needed in bringing out the best points of the first team."

Farley, who was one of the old players, acting as a coach, went on to add:

"I have used the word 'scrub' and 'second team,' though, as you well know, there is nothing like that here at Yale, that is as compared to football. When I say 'scrub' I mean one of the class teams, the Freshman, Sophomore or Junior, for, in a measure, while separate and distinct teams themselves, they will serve us the same purpose as a scrub or substitute team would in football. They will give us something to practice with—some opposition—for you've got to have two nines to make a ball game," and he smiled at the anxious ones looking at him.

"So," he went on, "When I use the word 'scrub' after this, or when any of the other coaches do, I want you to understand that it will mean one of the class teams which, for the pur-

pose of strengthening the 'varsity, and enabling it to practice, acts as opposition.

"Sometimes the 'varsity will play one team, and sometimes another, for the class teams will have their own contests to look after, to win, we hope; to lose, we hope not. I wish I could give you Freshmen encouragement that you could make the 'varsity, but, under the rules, none of you can. Now we'll get down to business."

He gave encouragement to many, and consoled those who might fail, or, at best, make only a class team. Then he introduced the captain—Tom Hatfield—who was received with a rousing cheer.

"Well, fellows," said Hatfield, "I haven't much to say. This is my first experience at the head of a big college nine, though you know I've played with you in many games."

"That's right—and played well, too!" yelled someone. "Three cheers for Hatfield!"

They were given with a will, and the captain resumed.

"Of course we're going to win this year, even if we didn't last." This was received in silence, for the losing of the championship to Princeton the previous season had been a sore blow to Yale. "We're going to win," went on Hatfield in a quiet voice; "but, just because we are, don't let that fool you into getting careless. We've all got to

work hard — to train hard — and we've got to practice. I expect every man to report regularly whether he thinks he has a chance to make the 'varsity or not. It's part of the game, and we've all got to play it—scrub and 'varsity alike.

"I guess that's all I've got to say, though I may have more later, after we get started. The coaches will take charge now and you'll have to do as they say. We won't do much to-day, just some catching and a bit of running to see how each fellow's wind is." He nodded to the coaches and trainer, and as he stepped back once more came the cry:

"Three cheers for Hatfield. Good old Yale cheers!"

The gymnasium rang with them, and then came the Boola song, after which the crowd formed in close line and did the serpentine dance.

"Now then, get busy!" commanded Mr. Benson. "Old players over that side, and the new ones here. Give in your names, and say where you've played. Lively now!"

He and Mr. Whitfield began circulating among the candidates, and, as they approached him, Joe felt his heart beginning to beat faster. Would he have a chance? And, if he got it, could he make good?

These were the questions he asked him.

"Name?"

"Matson—Joe."

"Hum. Yes. Ever played before?"

"Yes, on a school nine."

"Where?"

"Excelsior Hall."

"Hum! Yes. Never heard of it. Where did you play?"

"I pitched."

"Pitched. Hum! Yes. I never saw so many pitchers as we have this season. Well, I'll put you down for your Freshman class team, though I can't give you much encouragement," and Mr. Benson turned to the next lad. "Go over there and do some throwing, I'll watch you later," he concluded, and Joe's heart began to sink as he saw Spike motioning to him to come to one side and indulge in some practice balls.

"How'd you make out?" asked his room-mate.

"Oh, I'm engaged right off the bat," laughed Joe, but he could not conceal the anxiety in the voice that he strove to make indifferent.

"So? Then you had better luck than I. Whitfield told me he didn't think I had the right build for a catcher."

"Well, maybe we can both make our scrub class team," spoke Joe.

"Say, it hasn't half begun yet," declared Jimmie Lee, who had a hankering to play first base. "Wait until the main coach gets here, and we'll

have a shake-up that'll set some people on their ears."

"What do you mean?" asked Joe wonderingly.

"I mean that the main gazaboo isn't here yet: Mr. Forsythe Hasbrook—old Horsehide they call him. He's the main coach. These are only his assistants."

"Is that so?" inquired Spike.

"It sure is. He's the real thing in baseball—Horsehide is. An old Yale man, but up-to-date. Played ever since he was a baby, and knows the game from A to Z. He never gets here until the preliminary practice has begun on the field, and then it doesn't take him long to size a fellow up. Of course I only know what I've been told," he added, "but that goes all right."

"Well, if we didn't get picked for the team now, I don't believe we'll have any chance after the main coach gets here," said Joe.

"Guess not," assented Spike. "Here we go." And they started to practice.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SURPRISE

"Oh, get a little more speed on! Don't run so much like an ice wagon. Remember that the object is to get to the base before the ball does!"

"Lively now! Throw that in as if you meant it! We're not playing bean bag, remember!"

"Oh, swing to it! Swing to it! Make your body do some of the work as well as your arms!"

"Don't be afraid of the ball! It's hard, of course, that's the way it's made. But if you're going to flinch every time it comes your way you might as well play ping-pong!"

"Stand up to the plate! What if you do get hit?"

Thus the coaches were trying to instill into the new candidates for the 'varsity nine some rudiments of how they thought the game should be played. Sharp and bitter the words were sometimes, bitten off with a snap and exploded with cutting sarcasm, but it was their notion of how to get the best out of a man, and perhaps it was.

"Remember we want to win games," declared Mr. Benson. "We're not on the diamond to give a ladies' exhibition. You've got to play, and play hard if you want to represent Yale."

"That's right," chimed in Mr. Whitfield. "We've got to have the college championship this year. We've *GOT* to have it. Now try that over," he commanded of Ford Weston, who had struck one man out in practice. "Do it again. That's the kind of playing we want."

Joe, who had been catching with Spike, looked enviously at his rival, who was on the coveted mound, taking in succession many batters as they came up. Shorty Kendall was catching for the 'varsity pitcher, and the balls came into his big mitt with a resounding whack that told of speed.

"I wonder if I'll ever get there," mused Joe, and, somehow he regretted, for the first time since coming to Yale, that he had consented to the college arrangement. It seemed so impossible for him to make way against the handicap of other players ahead of him.

"If I'd finished at Excelsior," he told himself, "I think I'd have gotten into some minor league where good playing tells, and not class. Hang it all!"

The practice went on. It was the first of the outdoor playing, and while the gymnasium work had seemed to develop some new and unexpect-

edly good material, the real test of the diamond sent some of the more hopeful candidates back on the waiting list. As yet Joe had been given scant notice. He had been told to bat, pitch, catch and run, but that was all. He had done it, but it had all seemed useless.

The day was a perfect Spring one, and the diamond was in excellent condition. It had been rather wet, but the wind had dried it, and, though there were still evidences of frost in the ground, they would soon disappear under the influence of the warm sun.

In various sorts of uniforms, scattered over the big field, the candidates went at their practice with devotion and zeal. Winning a baseball game may not be much in the eyes of the world, getting the college championship may seem a small matter to the man of affairs—to the student or the politician, intent on bigger matters. But to the college lads themselves it meant much—it was a large part of their life.

And, after all, isn't life just one big game; and if we play it fairly and squarely and win—isn't that all there is to it? And, in a measure, doesn't playing at an athletic game fit one to play in life? It isn't always the winning that counts, but the spirit of fair play, the love for the square deal, the respect for a worthy foe, and the determination not to give up until you are fairly beaten

—all these things count for much. So, after all, one can not blame the college lads for the intense interest they take in their games. It is the best kind of training for life, for it is clean and healthful.

For a week or more this preliminary practice was kept up. The weather remained fine, and every afternoon the diamond was the scene of much excitement. The candidates reported faithfully, and worked hard. There were many shifts from some of the Sophomore or Junior nines to the 'varsity, and back again. Some who had been called to the "scrub," as I shall call the class nines when they practiced against the 'varsity, were sent back to the waiting list—at best to bunt balls to their fellows, to pitch or catch as suited the positions they hoped to fill.

Nor was it all easy work, it was really hard toil. It is one thing to play ball without much care as to the outcome, to toss the horsehide back and forth, and, if it is missed, only to laugh.

It is one thing to try to bat, to watch the ball coming toward you, wondering what sort of a curve will break, and whether you will hit it or miss it—or whether it will hit you—it is one thing to do that in a friendly little game, and laugh if you strike out.

But when making a nine depends on whether your stick connects with the sphere—when getting

the college letter for your sweater can be made, or unmade, by this same catching of the ball, then there is a different story back of it. There is a nervous tension that tires one almost as much as severe physical labor.

And there is hard physical work, too. Of course it is a welcome change from the class-room work, or the lectures, to get out on the diamond, but it is work, none the less.

Then there are the coaches to put up with. I never was a coach, though I have played under them, and I suppose there is some virtue in the method they use—that of driving the men.

And when a lad has done his best, has stood up to the ball, and clouted at it for all he is worth, only to fan the yielding air, it is rather discouraging to hear the coach remark sarcastically:

"You're not playing ping-pong, you know, Jones."

Or to hear him say with vinegary sweetness:

"Did you hurt yourself that time, Smith? It was a beautiful wind blow, but—er—pardon me if I mention, just for your benefit you know, that the object in this game is to *hit the ball.* You hit it, and then you run—run, understand, not walk. And another thing, don't be so afraid of it.

"Of course this isn't a rubber ball, of the sort you probably used to play baby in the hole with—

it's hard, and when it hits you it's going to hurt. But—don't let it hit you, and for cats' sake stand up to the plate!"

It's a way coaches have, I suppose, and always will. Joe felt so, at any rate, and he had rather one would fairly howl at him, in all sorts of strenuous language, than use that sarcastic tone. And I think I agree with him.

There is something you get at when a coach yells at you:

"Come on there you snail! Are you going to hold that base all day? Someone else wants to get past you know.

"Come on in! We need that run! Move as if you meant it! Don't fall asleep! Oh, for cats' sake, fanning the air again? Run now! That's it. Slide! Don't be afraid of soiling your clothes, we'll buy you another suit!"

I hold this is preferable to the soft and sarcastic method, but they used both varieties at Yale, and Joe sometimes got so discouraged at times that he felt like resigning. It was harder than he had dreamed of, and he had not pictured a rosy time for himself.

"I don't believe I'm ever going to make even the class scrub, Spike," said Joe to his room-mate one day, following some long practice, when he had not even been called on to bat.

"Oh, yes you will," declared his friend. "You

can pitch—you know it, and I know it. I haven't caught off you these two weeks for nothing. You can pitch, and they'll find it out sooner or later. Don't give up!"

"I'm not going to. And say, come to think of it, you're no better off than I am. They haven't noticed you either, and yet I've never seen anyone who held the balls any better than you do. And, as for throwing to second—say, you've got Kendall beaten."

"I'm glad you think so," murmured Spike.

"I know it!" insisted Joe. "I've played in a few games. But what's the use of kicking? Maybe our chance will come."

"I hope so," replied Spike.

The practice went on, the elimination and weeding out process being carried on with firm hands, regardless of the heart-breaks caused.

"First game to-morrow," announced Jimmie Lee, bursting into Joe's room one evening. "It's just been decided."

"Who do we play?" asked Spike. Joe felt his heart sink down lower than ever, for he realized that if he had a chance he would have heard of it by this time.

"Oh, it isn't a regular game," went on Jimmie, who was jubilant from having heard that he would at least start at first base for the class team. "The scrub, as they call it, and 'varsity will play

the first regular contest. Horsehide is to be there for the first time. Then there'll be something doing. I only hope he sees me."

"The first regular practice game to-morrow," mused Joe. "Well, it will be a good one—to watch."

"Yes—to watch," joined in Spike, grimly. "But the season is early yet, Joe."

As they were talking the door opened and Ricky Hanover came in. He was grinning broadly.

"Let's go out and have some sport," he proposed. "It's as dull as ditch water around here. Come on out and raise a riot. I'll take you fellows down to Glory's, and you can have a rabbit."

"Get out!" cried Spike. "We're in training, you heathen, and you're not."

"A precious lot of good it will do you," commented the newcomer. "Why don't you chuck it all? You'll never make the team—I mean you and Joe, Spike. Jimmie here has had luck. Chuck it and come on out."

"No," spoke Joe slowly. "I'm going to stick."

"So am I," added his room-mate. "You never can tell when your chance will come. Besides, we owe it to Yale to stick."

"All right—I suppose you're right," agreed Ricky, with a sigh. "I did the same thing at football. But I sure do want to start something."

"Begin on that," laughed Joe passing him over

the alarm clock. "It's run down. Wind it and start it going!"

Ricky joined in the laugh against him, and soon took his departure. Joe heard him come in at an early morning hour, and wondered what "sport" Ricky had been up to.

A large gathering turned out to see the first real baseball contest of the season. By it a line could be had on the sort of game the 'varsity would put up, and all the students were eager to see what sort of championship material they had.

There was a conference between coaches and captains, and the 'varsity list was announced. Weston was to pitch, and Kendall to catch. Neither Joe's name, nor those of any of his intimate chums were called off for a class team.

Joe did have some hope of the scrub, but when the name of the last man there had been called off, Joe's was not mentioned. He moved off to the side, with bitterness in his heart.

The game started off rather tamely, though the class pitcher—Bert Avondale—managed to strike out two of the 'varsity men, to the disgust of the coaches, who raced about, imploring their charges to hit the ball. At the same time they called on the scrub to do their best to prevent the 'varsity men from getting to the bases.

It was playing one against the other, just as

diamond dust is used to cut the precious stones of which it once formed a part.

"Well, I haven't seen anything wonderful," remarked Joe to Spike, after the first inning.

"No, they're a little slow warming up. But wait. Oh, I say, here he comes!"

"Who?"

"The head coach—Horsehide himself. I heard he was to be here to-day. It's his first appearance. Now they'll walk Spanish."

Across the back-field a man was approaching—a man who was eagerly surrounded by many of the candidates, and he was cheered to the echo, while murmurs of his name reached Joe.

"Let's go up and have a look at him," proposed Spike.

"Go ahead," agreed Joe, for the game had momentarily stopped at the advent of the head coach.

He was shaking hands all around, and, as Joe approached, Mr. Forsythe Hasbrook turned to greet someone behind him. Joe had a good look at his face, and to his great surprise he recognized it as that of the man whom he had driven to the depot in such a rush to catch a train.

"And he's Yale's head coach!" murmured Joe. "I—I wonder if he'll remember me?"

CHAPTER XV

HIS FIRST CHANCE

JOE MATSON'S hope of a quick recognition from the man he had helped that day, and who had turned out to be Yale's head coach, was doomed to disappointment, for Mr. Hasbrook—or, to give him the title lovingly bestowed on him by the players, "Horsehide"—had something else to do just then besides recognizing casual acquaintances. He wanted to watch the playing.

After a brief conference between himself and the other two coaches, in which the 'varsity captain had a part, Horsehide motioned for the playing to be resumed. He said little at first, and then when Weston, who was pitching, made a partial motion to throw the ball to first base, to catch a man there, but did not complete his evident intention, Mr. Hasbrook called out:

"Hold on there! Wait a minute, Weston. That was as near a balk as I've ever seen, and if this was a professional game you might lose it for us, just as one of the world series was, by a pitcher who did the same thing."

"What do you mean?" asked Weston, slightly surprised.

"I mean that pretending to throw a ball to first, and not completing the action, is a balk, and your opponents could claim it if they had been sharp enough. Where were your eyes?" he asked, of the scrub captain.

"I—er—I didn't think——"

"That's what your brains are for," snapped the head coach. "You can't play ball without brains, any more than you can without bases or a bat. Watch every move. It's the best general who wins battles—baseball or war. Now go on, and don't do that again, Weston, and, if he does, you call a balk on him and advance each man a base," ordered Horsehide.

The 'varsity pitcher and the scrub captain looked crestfallen, but it was a lesson they needed to learn.

"He's sharp, isn't he?" said Joe.

"That's what makes him the coach he is," spoke Spike. "What's the use of soft-soap? That never made a ball nine."

"No, I suppose not." Joe was wondering whether he ought to mention to his chum the chance meeting with Mr. Hasbrook, but he concluded that a wrong impression might get out and so he kept quiet, as he had done in the matter of the red paint on the porch. Nothing more had

been heard about that act of vandalism, though the professor who had fallen and spoiled the valuable manuscripts was reported to be doing some quiet investigating.

"I believe Weston had a hand in it," thought Joe, "but I'm not going to say anything. He had red paint on him, anyhow. I wonder what he has against me, and if he can do anything to keep me from getting a chance? If I thought so I'd—no, I can't do anything. I've just got to take it as it comes. If I do get a chance, though, I think I can make good."

The practice game went on, developing weak spots in both nines, and several shifts were made. But the 'varsity pitcher remained the same, and Joe watched Weston narrowly, trying to find out his good points.

For Weston had them. He was not a brilliant twirler, but he was a steady one, in the main, and he had considerable speed, but not much of a curve. Still he did manage to strike out a number of his opponents.

The game was almost over, and the 'varsity had it safely in hand. They had not obtained it without hard work, however, and they had made many glaring errors, but in this they were not alone.

"Though, for that matter," declared Joe, "I think the scrub pitcher did better, and had better

support, than the 'varsity. I don't see why the scrubs didn't win."

"It's just because they know they're playing against the 'varsity," declared Spike. "There's a sort of nervousness that makes 'em forget to do the things they could do if it was some other nine. Sort of over-awed I guess."

"Maybe," assented Joe. "Well, here's the end," and the game came to a close.

"Now for the post-mortem," remarked his room-mate. "The coaches and captain will get together and talk it over."

"Then we might as well vamoose," said Joe. "They won't need us."

"I guess not. Come on."

The boys strolled from the diamond. As they passed a group of the 'varsity players surrounding the coaches, Joe saw Mr. Hasbrook step forward. He had a bat and seemed to be illustrating some of the weak points of the plays just made, or to be about to demonstrate how properly to swing at a ball. As Joe came opposite him the head coach stepped out a little and saw our hero.

For a moment he stared unrecognizingly at him, and then a smile came over his rugged face. His eyes lighted up, and, stepping forward, he held out his hand.

"Why, how do you do!" he exclaimed. "I know you—I'm sure I've seen you somewhere be-

fore, and under queer circumstances, too, but I can't just recall—hold on, wait a moment!" he exclaimed, as he saw Joe about to speak. "I like to make my brain work.

"Ah! I have it! You're the young fellow who drove me to the station, in time to catch the New York train, the day my carriage wheel broke. Well, but I'm glad to see you again! That was a great service you did me, and I haven't forgotten it. Are you attending here?"

"Yes," said Joe, glad that he had not been forgotten.

"Good! Are you playing ball?"

"Well—er—I—that is I haven't——"

"Oh, I see. You're trying for your team. Good! I'm glad to hear it. It's a great game—the greatest there is. And so you are at Yale—Matson—you see I haven't forgotten your name. I never expected to meet you here. Do you know the other coaches?"

"I've met them," murmured Joe, and he half smiled in a grim fashion, for that was about as far as his acquaintanceship had progressed. He had met them but they did not know him apart from many others.

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Hasbrook. "Well, I'll see you again. And so you're at Yale? Look me up when you get time," and he turned back to his instruction, murmuring to the other coaches:

"He did me quite a service some time ago. I'm glad to see him again. Seems like a nice lad."

The others murmured an assent, and then gave their whole attention to the man who had, more than anyone else, perhaps, mastered the science of baseball as it ought to be played.

"Well, say, you've got a friend at court all right!" exclaimed Spike, as he and Joe strolled along. "If I had your chance I'd——"

"Chance!" exclaimed Joe. "What better chance have I than I had before?"

"Why, you know Horsehide! Why didn't you say so?"

"I didn't know I did until a little while ago. I had no idea that the man I picked up and took to the station would turn out to be the Yale coach. But if you think he's going to put me in ahead of the others just on that account you're mistaken."

"Oh, I don't say that."

"It wouldn't be square," went on Joe.

"Of course not. But as long as he does know you he might at least prevail on the other coaches to give you a better chance than you've had so far."

"Well, maybe," laughed Joe. "But I'm not expecting anything like that."

"Well, just remember me when your chance does come," begged Spike. "And remember that I told you."

"I will," declared Joe, with a laugh, and then he added more earnestly: "If ever I do get on the mound, Spike, I'll try to have you catch for me."

"I wish you would!"

As they went off the field they saw the knot of players still gathered about the head, and other coaches, receiving instructions, and how Joe Matson wished he was there none but himself knew.

In their rooms that afternoon and evening the ball players talked of little save the result of the first real clash between 'varsity and scrub, and the effect of the return of the head coach. It was agreed that the 'varsity, after all, had made a very creditable showing, while the upholders of the class team players gave them much praise.

"But things will begin to hum now!" exclaimed Jimmie Lee, as he sat in Joe's room, while the beds, sofa and table, to say nothing of the floor, were encumbered with many lads of the Red Shack, and some visitors from other places. "Yes, sir! Horsehide won't stand for any nonsense. They'll all have to toe the line now."

"Jove, weren't the other coaches stiff enough?" asked Clerkinwell De Vere, who aspired to right field. "They certainly laced into me for further orders when I muffed a ball."

"And so they should," declared Spike. "That's what they're for."

"Oh, but wait until you do that when Horsehide sees you," went on Jimmie. "That won't be a marker, will it, Shorty?"

"I should say not. He'll make your hair curl all right. He's a terror."

"Friend of Joe's here," put in Spike.

"No! is he?" demanded Ricky Hanover, who had drifted in. "How's that?"

"Oh, I just met him by accident," declared our hero. "It isn't worth mentioning." He told the incident after some urging.

"I wish I stood in your shoes," said De Vere. "I'd be sure of my place then."

"Nothing of the sort!" exclaimed Jimmie Lee. "If Horsehide played favorites that way, he wouldn't be the coach he is. That's one thing about him—he makes his friends work harder than anyone else. I know he did it other seasons—everyone says so."

"Oh, he's square," chimed in another. "There's not a better coach living, and none you can depend on more. All he wants is to see good, clean playing, and Yale to win."

Joe could not help thinking of the coincidence of meeting the head coach but, though he did have slight hopes that it might lead to something, he resolutely put them out of his mind.

"I don't want to get on even the 'varsity that way!" he said to himself that night, when the

visitors were gone, and he and Spike had turned in. "I want to win my way."

Nevertheless, he could not help a feeling of slight nervousness the next day, when he reported for practice.

"Well, same old gag over again I suppose," remarked Spike, as they went out to toss and catch.

"I suppose so," agreed Joe.

He passed Mr. Hasbrook, who was giving some instructions to the fielders just before the 'varsity-class game, but the head coach did not even notice Joe.

After some batting and catching, and some warming-up work on the part of the pitchers, Mr. Benson called for a cessation of practice.

"Here is the batting order and positions of the nines for to-day," he announced, producing a paper. He began to read off the names. For the 'varsity they were the same as the day before. Joe, who had permitted himself a faint hope, felt his heart sinking.

"For the opposition, or scrub," announced the assistant coach, and he ran down the line, until there was but one place unfilled—that of pitcher.

"Joe Matson!" he called, sharply.

CHAPTER XVI

JOE MAKES GOOD

FOR a moment our hero could scarcely believe his good fortune. He had been called to pitch for the scrub! Once more as he stood there, scarcely comprehending, Mr. Benson called out sharply:

"Didn't you hear, Matson? You're to pitch against the 'varsity, and I want you to beat 'em!"

"Yes—yes, sir," answered Joe, in a sort of daze.

"And, 'varsity, if you don't pound him all over the field you're no good! Eat 'em up!" snapped the assistant coach.

"Don't let 'em win, scrub," insisted Mr. Whitfield, and thus it went on—playing one against the other to get the 'varsity to do its best.

"Play ball!" called the umpire. "Get to work. Come in, you fellows," and he motioned to those who were out on the field warming up.

"Congratulations, old man!" murmured Spike, as he shook Joe's hand. "You deserve it."

"And so do you. I wish you were going to catch."

"I wish so, too, but maybe my chance will come later. Fool 'em now."

"I'll try."

Joe had a vision of Bert Avondale, the regular scrub pitcher, moving to the bench, and for an instant his heart smote him, as he noted Bert's despondent attitude.

"It's tough to be displaced," murmured Joe. "It's a queer world where your success has to be made on someone else's failure, and yet—well, it's all in the game. I may not make good, but I'm going to try awfully hard!"

He wondered how his advancement had come about, and naturally he reasoned that his preferment had resulted from the words spoken in private by Mr. Hasbrook.

"I wonder if I'd better thank him?" mused Joe. "It would be the right thing to do, and yet it would look as if he gave me the place by favor instead of because I've got a right to have it, for the reason that I can pitch. And yet he doesn't know that I can pitch worth a cent, unless some of the other coaches have told him. But they haven't watched me enough to know. However, I think I'll say nothing until I have made good."

Had Joe only known it, he had been more closely watched since his advent on the diamond than he had suspected. It is not the coach who appears to be taking notes of a man's style of play who

seems to find out most. Mr. Hasbrook, once he found that the lad who had rendered him such a service was at Yale, and had aspirations to the nine, made inquiries of the coaches who had done the preliminary work.

"Oh, Matson. Hum, yes. He does fairly well," admitted Mr. Benson. "He has a nice, clean delivery. He isn't much on batting, though."

"Few pitchers are," remarked the head coach. "I wonder if it would do to give him a trial?"

"I should say so—yes," put in Mr. Whitfield. He was quick to see that his co-worker had a little prejudice in Joe's favor, and, to do the assistant coaches justice, they both agreed that Joe had done very well. But there were so many ahead of him —men who had been at Yale longer—that in justice they must be tried out first.

"Then we'll try him on the scrub," decided Mr. Hasbrook; and so it had come about that Joe's name was called.

In order to give the scrubs every opportunity to beat the 'varsity, and so that those players would work all the harder to clinch the victory, the scrubs were allowed to go to bat last, thus enhancing their chances.

"Play ball!" yelled the umpire again. "It's getting late. Play ball!"

Joe, a little nervous, walked to the box, and caught the new white ball which was tossed to him.

As he was rubbing some dirt on it, to take off the smoothness of the horsehide, Mr. Hasbrook advanced toward him and motioned him to wait.

"Matson," said the head coach, smiling genially. "You wouldn't let me reward you for the great favor you did me a while ago, though I wanted to. I hoped sometime to be able to reciprocate, but I never thought it would come in this way. I have decided to give you a chance to make good."

"And I can't thank you enough!" burst out the young pitcher. "I feel that——"

"Tut! Tut!" exclaimed Mr. Hasbrook, holding up his hand, "I wouldn't have done this if I didn't think you had pitching stuff in you. In a way this isn't a favor at all, but you're right, though it might not have come so quickly. I appreciate your feelings, but there are a few things I want to say.

"At Yale every man stands on his own feet. There is no favoritism. Wealth doesn't count, as I guess you've found out. Membership in the Senior Societies—Skull and Bones, Scroll and Keys—Wolf's Head—doesn't count—though, as you will find, those exclusive organizations take their members because of what they have done—not of what they are.

"And so I'm giving you a chance to see what is in you. I'd like to see you make good, and I be-

lieve you will. But—if you don't—that ends it. Every tub must stand on its own bottom—you've got to stand on your feet. I've given you a chance. Maybe it would have come anyhow, but, out of friendship to you, and because of the service you did me, I was instrumental in having it come earlier. That is not favoritism. You can't know how much you did for me that day when you enabled me to get the train that, otherwise, I would have missed.

"It was not exactly a matter of life and death, but it was of vital importance to me. I would be ungrateful, indeed, if I did not repay you in the only way I could—by giving you the chance to which you are entitled.

"But—this is important—you've got to show that you can pitch or you'll lose your place. I've done what I can for you, and, if you prove worthy I'll do more. I'll give you the best coaching I can—but you've got to have backbone, a strong arm, a level head, and grit, and pluck, and a lot of other things to make the Yale nine. If you do I'll feel justified in what I have done. Now, play ball!" and without giving him a chance to utter the thanks that were on his lips, Mr. Hasbrook left Joe and took a position where he could watch the playing.

It is no wonder that our hero felt nervous under the circumstances. Anyone would, I think, and

when he pitched a wild ball, that the catcher had to leap for, there were some jeers.

"Oh, you've got a great find!" sneered Weston. "He's a pitcher from Pitchville!"

Joe flushed at the words, but he knew he would have to stand more than that in a match game, and he did not reply.

Other derogatory remarks were hurled at him, and the coaches permitted it, for a pitcher who wilts under a cross-fire is of little service in a big game, where everything is done to "get his goat," as the saying goes.

"Ball two!" yelled the umpire, at Joe's second delivery, and the lad was aware of a cold feeling down his spine.

"I've got to make good! I've got to make good!" fiercely he told himself over again. There seemed to be a mist before his eyes, but by an effort he cleared it away. He stooped over pretending to tie his shoe lace—an old trick to gain time—and when he rose he was master of himself again.

Swiftly, cleanly, and with the curve breaking at just the right moment, his next delivery went over the plate. The batsman struck at it and missed by a foot.

"Good work, old man!" called the catcher to him. "Let's have another."

But the next was a foul, and Joe began to worry.

"You're finding him," called the 'varsity captain to his man. "Line one out."

But Joe was determined that this should not be, and it was not, for though the batter did not make a move to strike at the second ball after the foul, the umpire called sharply:

"Strike—batter's out."

There was a moment of silence, and then a yell of delight from the scrubs and their friends.

"What's the matter with you?" angrily demanded Mr. Hasbrook of the batter. "Can't you hit anything?"

The batsman shook his head sadly.

"That's the boy!"

"That's the way to do it!"

"You're all right, Matson!"

These were only a few cries that resounded. Joe felt a warm glow in his heart, but he knew the battle had only begun.

If he had hoped to pitch a no-hit, no-run game he was vastly disappointed, for the batters began to find him after that for scattering pokes down the field. Not badly, but enough to show to Joe and the others that he had much yet to learn.

I am not going to describe that practice game in detail, for there are more important contests to come. Sufficient to say that, to the utter surprise of the 'varsity, the scrub not only continued to hold them well down, but even forged ahead of

them. In vain the coaches argued, stormed and pleaded. At the beginning of the ninth inning the scrubs were one run ahead.

"Now if we can shut them out we'll win!" yelled Billy Wakefield, the scrub captain, clapping Joe on the back. "Can you do it?"

"I'll try, old man," and the pitcher breathed a trifle faster. It was a time to try his soul.

He was so nervous that he walked the first man, and the 'varsity began to jeer him.

"We've got his goat! Play tag around the bases now! Everyone gets a poke at it!" they cried.

Joe shut his lips firmly. He was holding himself well in, and Mr. Hasbrook, watching, murmured:

"He's got nerve. He may do, if he's got the ability, the speed and the stick-to-it-iveness. I think I made no mistake."

Joe struck out the next man cleanly, though the man on first stole to second. Then, on a puzzling little fly, which the shortstop, with no excuse in the world, missed, another man got to first.

There was a double steal when Joe sent in his next delivery, and the catcher, in a magnificent throw to second, nearly caught his man. It was a close decision, but the umpire called him safe.

There were now two on bases, the first sack being unocccupied, and only one out.

"Careful," warned the catcher, and Joe nodded.

Perhaps it was lucky that a not very formidable hitter was up next, for, after two balls had been called, Joe struck him out, making two down.

"Now for the final!" he murmured, as the next batter faced him. There were still two on bases, and a good hit would mean two runs in, possibly three if it was a homer.

"I'm going to strike him out!" thought Joe fiercely.

But when two foul strikes resulted from balls that he had hoped would be missed he was not so sure. He had given no balls, however, and there was still a reserve in his favor.

"Ball one!" yelled the umpire, at the next delivery. Joe could hear his mates breathing hard. He rubbed a little soil on the horsehide, though it did not need it, but it gave him a moment's respite. Then, swift and sure, he threw the ball. Right for the plate it went, and the batter lunged fiercely at it.

But he did not hit it.

"Striker out—side's out!" came from the umpire.

Joe had made good.

CHAPTER XVII

ANOTHER STEP

"'Varsity beaten! What do you know about that?" gasped Ricky Hanover, as the crowd that had watched the game swarmed out on the diamond.

"And Joe Matson did it!" added Spike. "Jove! but I'm glad for his sake! And him only a Freshman, playing on a scrub class team. I'm glad!"

"So am I," added Jimmie Lee, who joined them.

"Will this get him a permanent place?" asked Ricky. "He's entitled to it."

"Well, he's got his foot on the first rung of the ladder anyhow," was Jimmie's opinion. "But it'll be a good while before he pitches for the 'varsity. He's got to show the coaches that it was no freak work. Besides he's got a year to wait."

"And he can do it!" declared Spike. "I haven't been catching him these last two weeks for nothing. Joe isn't a freak pitcher. He's got

control, and that's better than speed or curves, though he has them, too."

On all sides there was talk about the result of the practice game. Of course the second nine had, in times past, often beaten the 'varsity, for the element of luck played into the hands of the scrub as well as into those of its opponents.

But the times were few and far between when the first nine had to go down to defeat, especially in the matter of a scrub Freshman pitcher administering it to them, and Joe's glory was all the greater.

"Congratulations, old man!" exclaimed Avondale, the scrub twirler whom Joe had temporarily displaced. "You saw your duty and you done it nobly, as the poet says. You didn't let 'em fuss you when you were in a tight corner, and that's what tells in a ball game. Shake!"

"Thanks!" exclaimed Joe. He knew just what it meant for his rival to do this, and he appreciated it. "You can have a whack at them next."

"I'm afraid not," returned Avondale. "You did so well that they'll want to keep you at scrub, and you'll be on the 'varsity before you know it."

"I wish I could think so," laughed Joe. As he spoke he saw Ford Weston passing behind him, and the 'varsity pitcher had heard what was said. A scowl passed over his face. He did not speak to Joe, but to Captain Hatfield, who was with him,

the pitcher murmured, loudly enough to be heard:

"It was just a fluke, that was all. We could have won only for the errors the fielders made."

"Maybe—maybe not," agreed the captain. "I think we were outpitched, and I'm not afraid to acknowledge it. We've got to do better!

"Do you mean me?" There was challenge in Weston's tone.

"I mean all of us," was the quiet answer. "Matson, you did us up brown, but you won't do it again," and the captain laughed frankly.

"I'll try—if I get the chance," was the grim retort.

Meanwhile the coaches had singled out some of the 'varsity members whose playing had shown faults, and were giving instructions how to correct them. Merky Bardine, who played on third, had sprained his leg slightly, and the trainer, McLeary, had taken him in hand to treat him. Mr. Hasbrook walked up to Joe.

"You did very well," the chief coach was good enough to say, "and I'm glad you had your chance. You have a number of faults to correct, but I think you can master them. One is that you don't get enough into the game yourself. A pitcher must do more than merely deliver the ball. Twice in this game you didn't get after the bunts as you might have done."

Joe felt a little discouraged. He had hoped

for unqualified praise from the head coach, but he was sensible enough to realize that it was all said for his benefit, and he resolved to profit by it. In fact it was this quality and ability of Joe's—enabling him to receive advice graciously—that made him the wonderful pitcher he afterward became.

"You must play into the game more," went on Mr. Hasbrook. "Outside of the catcher, you're the only man on the team who can handle certain bunts—I mean the pitcher. For that reason you want to study a style of delivery that won't leave you in a bad position to look after the ball if it is hit your way. You have the right idea now in throwing, but you can improve, I'm sure."

"I'll try," spoke Joe.

"I know you will, and that's why I'm taking the trouble to talk to you. Then you've got to be on the watch for base stealing. There are some catchers who can pretend to throw to second, and yet so suddenly change as to deliver the ball to the pitcher. This deceives the man on third, who starts for home, and if you have the ball you can nip him. So far we haven't had a catcher who can work this trick, but we may develop one before we get through."

"Then Kendall isn't sure of his place?" asked Joe eagerly, thinking of the desire of his chum Spike to fill the position behind the plate later on.

"Well, he's reasonably sure of it," went on the head coach cautiously. "But we never can tell what will develop after the season opens. Another point I'd like to impress on you is, that sometimes you've got to help out on first base. Particularly is this the case when a bunt comes that the first baseman can take care of. Then it's your duty to hustle over to first."

"Yes, sir," answered Joe. It was all he could think of to say at the time. In fact he was rather dazed. There was a deal more to this baseball game than he had imagined. He was beginning to get an inkling of the difference between the amateur sport and the professional way of playing.

"I don't want to burden you with too much advice at the start," went on Mr. Hasbrook, "for I want you to remember what I tell you. From time to time, as I see your weak points, I'm going to mention them to you."

"I'll be glad if you will," spoke Joe earnestly.

"On the whole you did very well to-day," concluded the head coach, "and I'm glad we gave you the chance. Report for light practice to-morrow, and the next day we'll try another game. Look after your arm. You used it a good bit this afternoon."

Joe felt in rather better spirits after Mr. Hasbrook had finished than when he began.

"I'm going to get a fair chance to show what

I can do, anyhow," declared our hero, as he went to his room. On the way he was joined by Spike, who had dropped back when the head coach started his instructions.

"Well?" asked Joe's room-mate.

"Fairly well," was the answer. "Say, I believe you've got a chance, Spike."

"Me? How?"

"Why, it isn't settled that Kendall will catch all of next season."

'Oh, I guess it is as much as anything is settled in this world. "But I can wait. I've got four years here."

Joe was elated at his triumph, and little was talked of in baseball circles that night but how the scrubs had "put one over" on the 'varsity. There was some disposition to criticize the first team for loose and too confident playing, but those who knew gave Joe credit for what he had done.

And so the baseball season went on until the varsity was fully perfected and established, the class teams improved and the schedule made up. Then came hard and grilling work. Joe was doing his best on his Freshman class team, and often played against the college nine, either in conjunction with his mates, or, when it was desired to give one of the other Freshmen pitchers a chance, taking part with a mixed "scrub" team, composed of

lads from various classes in order to give the 'varsity good opposition.

And Yale swept on her way. Of course Joe bewailed the fact that he would have to lose a whole year before he could hope for a chance to be on the first team, but he bided his time. Weston was doing fairly well, and the feeling between him and our hero had not changed.

The Spring term was drawing to a close. Yale and Princeton had met twice, and there was a game apiece. Yale had also played other colleges, losing occasionally, but winning often enough to entitle her to claim the championship if she took the odd game from the Tiger. But she did not, and though her players insisted, none the less, that Yale was at the top of the heap, and though the sporting writers conceded this, still Princeton won the third game. And Yale was bitter, though she stood it grimly,—as she always does.

"Well, we'll see what next year will bring forth," said Spike to Joe, at the wind-up of the baseball season. "You're coming back; aren't you?"

"I wouldn't miss it for anything now. Though, as a matter of fact, I didn't expect to. I thought I'd take one year here, and if I could get on the 'varsity nine long enough to say I had been on it, I'd quit, and go in for the professional end if it.

But, since I can't, I'll come back and make another stab at it."

"That's the way to talk. Well, I hope to be here, too."

The Summer vacation came, and Joe had passed his examinations. Not brilliantly, but sufficiently well to enable him to enter the Sophomore class.

"And if I don't make the 'varsity next Spring, it will be my own fault!" he cried, as he said good-bye to his chums and packed up for home.

The Summer passed pleasantly enough. Joe's family took a cottage at a lake resort, and of course Joe organized a ball team among the temporary residents of the resort. A number of games were played, Joe pitching in fine style. One day a manager of one of the minor leagues attended a contest where Joe pitched, and when word of this was carried to our hero he had a nervous fit. But he pulled himself together, twirled magnificently, and was pleased to see the "magnate" nod approvingly. Though later, when someone offered to introduce Joe to him, the lad declined.

"I'll wait until I've made a better reputation," he declared. "I want the Yale Y before I go looking for other honors"; and he stuck to that.

"Joe seems to care more for college than you thought he would, father," said Mrs. Matson, when it came time for her son to go back as a

Sophomore for the next Fall term. "I think he'll finish yet, and make us all proud of him."

"Joe will never do anything that would not make us proud of him," said his father. "But I rather fancy the reason he is so willing to go back to Yale is that he didn't make the 'varsity baseball nine last season. There's a rule against Freshmen, you know."

"Oh dear!" lamented Mrs. Matson. "I did hope he would like college for its own sake, and not for baseball."

"It's hard to separate baseball and football from college likings, I guess," conceded her husband.

And so Joe went back. It was quite different from entering New Haven as a Freshman, and even in the old elms he seemed to have a proprietary interest. He took his old room, because he liked it, and a number of his other Sophomore friends did likewise, though some Freshmen held forth there as usual.

Then came the football season, and, though Joe took an interest in this, and even consented to try for the scrub, he was not cut out for that sort of work, and soon gave it up.

Yale made her usual success on the gridiron, though the far-famed game with Princeton resulted in a tie, which made the baseball nine all the more anxious to win the championship.

The Winter seemed endless, but soon there was the beginning of baseball talk, as before, and this was regarded as a sign of Spring. There was no question now but what Joe was eligible for the 'varsity, though that was far from saying that he would be picked for it. All his old friends had returned to the university, and there was little change in the baseball situation as regards new names. Most of the old ones kept their same places.

Nothing definite had been learned about the red paint episode, and though it was mentioned occasionally, and often in a censorious manner as against the perpetrator of it, the latter was not discovered.

Then there began to gather at Yale the old-time players, who acted as coaches. Mr. Hasbrook, who from long familiarity with the game, and from his intense love of it, and for his *alma mater,* was again named as head coach.

"Well, we've got a pretty good nine, I think," said Weston one day, after hard practice against the Freshmen. How Joe did thank his stars that he was not in the latter team, though he was first pitcher on the Sophomore team.

"Yes, we have," admitted several. "It looks as if we could trim Princeton this time." Joe had pitched for the 'varsity in some informal practice games, though Weston was regarded still as first

choice. And Joe was fearful that his cherished ambition was yet far from being realized.

"We're playing good ball," said Weston. "I don't say that because I'm pitching," he added quickly, as he saw some looking at him curiously, "but because we have got a good team—mostly old players, too," and he glanced meaningly at Joe, as though he resented his entrance as an aspirant for the mound.

"One thing—we've got to tighten up considerably," declared Captain Hatfield. "We'll play our first match game with Amherst in two weeks, and we want to swamp 'em."

"Oh, we will," said Weston easily.

"Not unless you pitch better—and we all play better," was the grim answer.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I said. You've got to strike more men out, and play a livelier game."

"Well, I guess I can," answered the pitcher, sullenly.

There was only light practice the next day, and Joe was told to perfect himself in signals with the class captain. Then came another hard practice contest, and, somewhat to Joe's surprise, he was not called on to pitch, as he fully expected. But he resigned himself cheerfully when Avondale went to the mound. Had our hero but known it, Mr. Hasbrook had deliberately omitted to start Joe,

wishing to discipline him, not, however, because of anything Joe had done.

"I think there's championship material for one of the big leagues in that lad," mused the head coach, to justify himself, "and he's got a hard row ahead of him unless he learns to take disappointment. I'll start him on the right track, though I would like to pitch him steadily."

And so Joe sat on the bench, while his rival pitched. Whether it was on this account, or because the 'varsity had tightened, was not at once apparent, but the fact was that the first team began to pound out runs, and the scrub did not.

"That's the way!" exclaimed the enthusiastic assistant coaches. "Eat 'em up, 'varsity!"

Mr. Hasbrook smiled, but said nothing. At the end of the seventh inning Joe was sent in to pitch, but it was too late for the scrubs to save the game for themselves, since the 'varsity had it by six runs. Nor did Joe escape hitless, though from the time he went in no runs were made by his opponents.

"Joe, you're a better pitcher than I am," declared Avondale, frankly. "I can see where I've made mistakes."

"Well, it isn't too late to fix 'em."

"Yes, I'm afraid it is," and, as it developed, it was, for from then on Joe did most of the pitching for the scrub. Occasionally, when his arm was

a bit lame, Avondale was sent in, or one of the other pitching candidates, but the result was nearly always disastrous for the scrub.

Not that Joe always made good. He had his off days, when his curves did not seem to break right, and when his control was poor. But he was trying to carry out Mr. Hasbrook's instructions to get into more plays, and this handicapped him a bit at the start.

The head coach saw this, and made allowances, keeping Joe on the mound when the assistants would have substituted someone else.

"Wait," advised the head coach. "I know what I'm doing."

The season was beginning to open. Schedules were being arranged, and soon Yale would begin to meet her opponents. The practice grew harder and more exacting. The voices of the coaches were more stern and sharp. No errors were excused, and the scrub was worked doubly hard to make the 'varsity that much better.

Ford Weston had improved considerably and then one day he went to pieces in the box, when playing a particularly close and hard game with the scrub.

There was surprise and consternation, and a hasty conference of the coaches. An attempt was made to stem the tide by putting in McAnish, the southpaw, and he did some excellent work, but the

scrub seemed to have struck a winning streak and took everything that came their way. Joe was pitching, and held the first team well down.

There was gloom in Yale that night, for the game with Amherst was not far off, and the Amherst lads were reported to be a fast and snappy lot.

There was a day of rest, and then came the final practice against the scrub. There was a consultation among the coaches in which the first and second captains participated before the contest. Then Mr. Hasbrook separated himself from the others.

"Matson!" he called sharply. "You and Kendall warm up a bit, and get a line on each other's signals. Matson, you're going to pitch for the 'varsity to-day!"

CHAPTER XVIII

PLOTTING

Joe Matson was trembling when he went to his place, even after some lively warming-up practice with the catcher. The very thing he most wanted had come to him very unexpectedly. And yet he was sensible enough to realize that this was only a trial, and that it did not mean he would pitch against Amherst. But he had great hopes.

"Come!" he exclaimed to himself, as he got ready for the opening of the game, "I've got to pull myself together or I'll go all to pieces. Brace up!"

The sight of Weston glaring at him helped, in a measure, to restore Joe to himself.

"He's hoping I won't make good," thought Joe. "But I will! I must!"

It may have been because of Joe's natural nervousness, or because the scrub team was determined to show that they could bat even their own pitcher, that was the cause of so many runs coming in during the first inning. No one could

rightly say, but the fact remained that the runs did come in, and it began to look bad for the 'varsity.

"I told you how it would be—putting in a green pitcher," complained Mr. Benson.

"Perhaps," admitted the head coach. "But wait a bit. Joe isn't as green as he looks. Wait until next inning."

And he was justified, for Joe got himself well in hand, and the 'varsity, as if driven to desperation by another defeat staring them in the face so near to the Amherst game, batted as they never had before. Avondale was all but knocked out of the box, and the scrub captain substituted another pitcher, who did much better. Joe's former rival almost wept at his own inability.

Meanwhile our hero was himself again, and though he did give three men their bases on balls, he allowed very few hits, so that the 'varsity took the game by a good margin, considering their bad start.

"That's the way to do it!" cried Captain Hatfield, when the contest was over.

"Do it to Amherst," was the comment of the head coach.

"We will!" cried the members of the first team.

"Good work, Matson," complimented Hatfield. "Can you do it again?"

"Maybe—if I get the chance," laughed Joe, who was on an elevation of delight.

"Oh, I guess you'll have to get the chance," spoke the captain. He did not notice that Weston was close behind him, but Joe did, and he saw the look of anger and almost hate that passed over the face of the pitcher.

"He looks as though he'd like to bite me," murmured Joe. "And yet it's all a fair game. I may get knocked out myself. But even then I'm not going to give up. I'm in this to stay! If not at Yale, then somewhere else."

If Joe imagined that his work that day had been without flaws he was soon to be disillusioned, for Mr. Hasbrook, coming up to him a little later, pointed out where he had made several bad errors in judgment, though they had not resulted in any gain for the scrub.

"Still," said the head coach, "you don't want to make them, for with a sharp team, and some of the big college nines playing against you, those same errors would lose the game." And he proceeded to give Joe some good advice.

When Avondale, the twice-humiliated pitcher, walked off the diamond that afternoon, he was joined by Weston, who linked his arm in that of the scrub twirler.

"Well, we're both in the same boat," remarked Avondale. "A better man has ousted us."

"Not at all—nothing of the sort!" cried Weston, and his voice showed how much he was nervously wrought up. "I don't admit for a minute that Matson can pitch better than I can."

"Well, I do, in my own case, and the coaches seem to in yours."

"I'm a little out of form to-day," admitted Weston, quickly. "I'll be all right to-morrow, and I'll pitch against Amherst."

"It'll be a great game," spoke Avondale.

"Maybe. But say, what do you think of a fellow like him—a regular country clod-hopper—coming here, anyhow?"

"Who do you mean?"

"Matson. What right has he got to butt in at a college like Yale, and displace the fellows who have worked hard for the nine?"

"The right of ability, I suppose."

"Ability nothing! He doesn't belong here, and he ought to be made to quit."

"Well, I confess I don't like to lose the place I worked so hard for, and I don't see much chance of making the 'varsity now," admitted Avondale; "but at the same time I must give Matson credit for his work."

"Bah! It's only a flash in the pan. He can't last. I think I could make him quit if I wanted to."

"How?"

"Would you join me in a little trick if we could?"

"I don't know. What do you mean?" and Avondale looked curiously at his companion.

"I mean that red paint business and the spoiling of the ancient manuscripts. If it was known who did it he'd get fired."

"You don't mean to say Matson had a hand in that!" cried Avondale aghast.

"I'm not saying anything. But if it could be shown that he did it, he'd not pitch for Yale—that's sure. Shall I say any more? Remember I'm making no cracks yet. But I know some things about Matson no one else knows." This was true enough, but Avondale did not take it in the sense in which it could have been truthfully said, but, rather, as Weston meant he should—wrongly.

Now Avondale had one fault. He was too easily led. He was brilliant, full of promise, and a jolly chap—hail-fellow-well-met with everyone, and that is not the best thing in the world, though it makes for temporary popularity. Avondale was his own worst enemy, and many a time he had not the courage to say "no!" when the utterance of it would have saved him from trouble. So when Weston thus temptingly held out the bait, Avondale nibbled.

"Shall I say any more?" went on the other.

Remember, you've got to be as tight as a drum on this."

"Of course. I—er—I—that is——"

"Come over here and I'll tell you something," went on the 'varsity pitcher, and the two were soon in close conversation.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ANONYMOUS LETTER

"HAVE you seen the *News?*" gasped Jimmie Lee, bursting into the room of Joe and his chum one afternoon, following some baseball practice. "It's great!"

"You mean have we *heard* the news; don't you?" questioned Spike. "You can hear news, but not see it, that is unless the occurrence which makes news happens to come under your own observation. Where is your logic, you heathen? *Seen* news!"

"Yes, that's what I mean!" snapped Jimmie. "I mean have you seen the last copy of the Yale *News?*"

"No; what is it?" asked Joe quickly. "Something about the baseball nine?"

"No, it's about those musty old manuscripts that got spoiled the time Professor Hardee slipped on his doorsteps in the red paint."

"What about 'em?" demanded Joe, thinking of the time he had seen Weston slipping into his

room, trying to conceal his hand on which was a scarlet smear. "What's new?"

"Why, it seems that some learned high-brow society wrote on to borrow them, to prove or disprove something that happened in the time of Moses, and they had to be refused as the sheepskins are illegible. The powers that be tried to clean off the paint, but it took some of the lettering with it, and Prof. Hardee and some of his friends are wild over the loss. The *News* says it's irreparable, and there's even an editorial on it."

"Well, that isn't much that's new," went on Joe, as he took the college paper which Jimmie held out to him. "It was known before that the parchments were pretty well on the blink. It's a shame, too, for they are the only ones in the world of that particular dynasty. What else?"

"Lots," went on Jimmie. "The *News* hints that a committee of Seniors is working with Professor Hardee and some of the faculty, trying to find out who was responsible. If they do find out they may make the joker's folks pay heavy damages."

"Yes, if they find out," put in Spike. "But it happened some time ago, and they haven't got a hint of it yet. It was a mean trick—I'll say that—but there are no welchers or squealers at Yale."

"I'm not so sure of that," murmured Jimmie.

"What do you mean?" asked Joe quickly.

"Why this screed goes on to hint that the investigators have a line on who did it. They have some clews, it seems, and an exposure is hinted at."

"Get out!" cried Joe, thinking of the effect it would have on Weston should the truth—as Joe thought it—come out. He had half made up his mind to deny everything he had seen, even if questioned.

"That's right," asserted Jimmie. "This article says it may soon be known who did the 'dastardly deed'—note the 'dastardly'—guess the editor dipped his pen in sulphuric acid. But it was a mean trick, and I guess we all feel the same way about it. The fellow who did it ought to be fired. Fun is fun, and I like it as much as anybody, but this passes the limits."

"Right!" exclaimed Spike. "But does it say anything about who it might be—what class?"

"Oh, it as much as says a Freshman did it, of course—as if we did everything last year. Anyhow, it's stirred up a lot of talk, I can tell you. I just came across the campus and the *News* sold more copies than ever before, I guess. Everyone seems to have one, and they're all talking about it. I hope if they do find out who did it, that he won't happen to be any of our crowd—or on the ball nine."

"Why?" asked Spike.

"Why—he'd be expelled, of course, and if it was one of the 'varsity nine it might have a bad effect on winning the championship. We've got to win that this year."

"Oh, I guess it's mostly talk," asserted Spike, as he read the article after Joe had finished. As for Joe he said little. But he thought much.

"Maybe," agreed Jimmie. "And yet it looks as if there was something back of it all. I only hope there isn't. It would be tough for our class to have to stand for this."

There was more talk along the same line, and, a little later, some other of the second-year class dropped in and continued the session. There were differences of opinion, as might have been expected.

"Well, after all is said and done," came from Bert Fost, who by reason of weight was ineligible for the nine, but who was an enthusiastic supporter, "when it's all over, I think we'll wipe Amherst off the map."

"We will—if the nine isn't broken up," declared Jimmie.

"Broken up—what do you mean?" and Bert glared at the questioner.

"I mean that if it's proved that some member of the team did this red paint business it's all off with him having a chance to play against Amherst."

"Oh, piffle!" declared Bert. "That punk is written by some lad who's trying to make good on the *News* so he'll get tapped for Scroll and Keys. Forget it."

But it was not so easily forgotten, for the article seemed to have some definite knowledge behind it, and the editorial, though student-inspired, as all knew, was a sharp one.

"If it really is Weston I'm sorry for him," thought Joe, little thinking how near he himself was to danger.

There were new developments the next morning—a certain something in the air as the young men assembled for chapel told that there was about to be a break. And it came.

"Here comes the Dean!" the whisper went round, when the exercises were nearly over. "Something's going to be cut loose."

The Dean addressed the students. He began mildly, but soon he had almost worked himself up to a dramatic situation. In veiled terms he referred to the red paint outrage, and then, after telling what it meant to have the valuable manuscripts ruined, he added:

"I assume that you have all seen the article which appears in the college paper. With that, though I might, I take no issue. On another phase I do.

"I have received an anonymous letter, accusing

a certain student of the outrage. I shall, in this matter, take the course I always do when I receive such a cowardly communication as an anonymous letter—I destroy it unread," and, as he spoke the Dean tore into fragments a piece of paper. The pieces he carefully put in his pocket, however, with the remark that they would be consigned to the fire unlooked at, as soon as possible.

"I wonder who was accused?" said Spike.

"I wonder?" added Joe.

CHAPTER XX

THE CORNELL HOST

"THAT's the way to do it!"

"Yale always can do it!"

"Bull dog grit!"

"The blue always wins!"

"They came—they saw—but—we conquered!"

It was the close of the Yale-Amherst baseball game, and the sons of Eli had gloriously triumphed. They had trailed the banners of their opponents in the dust, they had raced around the bases, they had batted the ball into the far corners of the field, and they had raced home with the runs.

"I told you so!" chirped Jimmie Lee.

"Hold on!" cried Slim Jones. "Didn't you start to be a calamity howler, and say Yale wouldn't win?"

"Never!" asserted Jimmie.

"Yes, you did!"

"Well, I was only bluffing. I knew we could put it all over them."

"And we did," said Spike in a low voice to Joe. "Only——"

"Only I didn't have much share in it," interrupted the aspirant for pitching honors.

There had indeed been a "shake-up" on the nine the day of the game. Until the last moment it was not definitely settled who would pitch, and there were many rumors current. It lay between Joe, Weston, and McAnish, the left-handed one, and on the morning of the game—the first important one of the season for Yale—the newspapers had various guesses as to who would be the twirler.

Joe had hoped to go in at the start, but when the game was called, and Captain Hatfield submitted his list, it was seen that Weston had the coveted place.

"Well, old man, you're back where you belong," said Avondale to him, as the name was called. "I suppose now, that little matter, which you were speaking to me about, can drop?"

"It can—if I remain pitcher," answered Weston. "But I've got it all cocked and primed to explode if I have to. I'm not going to sit tight and let some country whipper-snapper put it all over me."

"I don't know as I blame you—and yet he seems a pretty decent sort."

"Oh, he's not in our class!"

"Well, maybe not. Do your best!"

And Weston did. Never had he pitched a better game—even his enemies, and he had not a few, admitted that. It was a "walkover" soon after the first few innings had demonstrated the superiority of Yale. Amherst was game, and fought to the last ditch, but neither in batting, fielding nor pitching was she the equal of the wearers of the blue.

Joe, sitting on the bench, with the other substitutes, fretted his heart out, hoping for a chance to play, but he was not called on until the eighth inning. Then, after a conference of the coaches, during which the head one could be seen to gesticulate vigorously, Joe was called on to bat in place of another, which gave him the call to pitch the next inning.

"What's the matter?" was asked on all sides. "Is Weston going stale?"

"Glass arm," suggested some of his enemies.

"No, they're saving him for the Harvard game," was the opinion of many. "They don't want to work him too hard."

"And we have this game anyhow."

"But what's the matter with McAnish?"

"Oh, he's out of form."

And so Joe had gone in at the eleventh hour, before that sitting on the bench, eating his heart out.

"Show what you can do!" exclaimed the head coach to him as he took the mound. "And don't worry."

"Don't worry?" repeated Joe.

"That's what I said. Remember what I told you, and don't try to win the game by merely pitching."

Joe recalled his instructions about backing up first base in an emergency, of taking care of the bunts, of watching the catcher, who might try to deceive the man on third.

And it was well for Joe that he did. For, though he did well from the pitching end, there came several opportunities to distinguish himself in making infield plays. Once he made a fine stop of a bunt that, had it been a safety, would have done much to lower Yale's lead. Again he managed, by a quick play, on getting the ball from the catcher, to throw out the man at second, who was trying to steal third. There was applause for Joe Matson that day, though he did not pitch the team to victory.

"Well?" asked Mr. Hasbrook of his colleagues, after the contest. "What did I tell you? Isn't he an all-around good player?"

"He seems so," admitted Mr. Benson. "But I think Weston did most excellently."

"Yes, he did," said the head coach, "but mark my words, he's overtrained or he hasn't the grit to

stick it out. Here we are at the beginning of the season, and he has failed us several times. I don't want to force my judgment on you gentlemen, but I think we ought to give Matson a better trial."

"All right, we'll send him in earlier in the Cornell game next week," suggested Mr. Whitfield, and to that the head coach agreed.

There were all sorts of baseball politics discussed in the dormitories, on the campus, and at Glory's and other resorts that night.

"It begins to look as if the coaches didn't quite know where they were at," declared Ricky Hanover. "They make a shift at the last minute."

"A good shift—according to the way the game went," declared Hen Johnson, who held down second base.

"That's yet to be seen," asserted Jimmie Lee. "Amherst was fruit for us to-day."

The opinions went back and forth—*pro* and *con*—and it was, after all, a matter of judgment. Yet back of it all was the indomitable Yale spirit that has often turned defeat into victory. This was to hearten up those who picked flaws in the playing of the blue, and who predicted a slump in the following week, when the strong Cornell team would be met.

"Oh, Cornell may row us but she can't play ball

us," declared Jimmie Lee. "We'll dump 'em."

"We may—if Joe Matson pitches," spoke Spike, in a low voice.

"Here! Cut that out," advised Joe, in a sharp whisper.

Meanwhile no more had been heard about the red paint matter, and it looked to be but a flash in the pan—what the *News* had printed. The Senior committee of investigation was not in evidence—at least as far as could be learned.

Baseball practice went on, sometimes Joe pitching for the 'varsity, and again one of his rivals being called on. There was a tightening up on the part of the coaches—they were less tolerant—the errors were less excused. Bitter words were the portion of those who made mistakes, and Joe did not escape.

"You must do a little better," the head coach urged him. "We're not playing school teams, remember, but teams that are but little removed from the professional class, as regards ability. Play harder—sharper—more accurately—don't get rattled."

And Joe tried to tell himself that he would do or not do these things, but it was hard work. He had begun to realize what a career he had marked out for himself.

"Well, are you going to spring it?" asked

Avondale of Weston, a day or so before the Cornell game. "What about the red paint?"

"Oh, I guess it will keep—if I pitch the game," was the answer.

"Did you send the anonymous letter?"

"Don't ask me," snapped Weston.

The day of the next game came—one of the great battles of the diamond, on the winning or losing of which depended, in a measure, the gaining of the championship.

The Cornell host, many strong, descended on New Haven, and made the air vibrant with their yells. They cheered Yale, and were cheered in turn.

Out on the diamond they trotted—a likely looking lot of lads.

"Husky bunch," commented Jimmie Lee.

"They sure are," agreed Shorty Kendall.

"Who'll pitch for you?"

"Don't know. They're just going to announce it."

The umpire, the captains, managers, and coaches were holding a conference. Joe, in spite of his seeming indifference, watched them narrowly. Over in their section the Cornell hosts were singing their songs and giving their cheers.

The wearers of the blue had given their great cry—they had sung the Boola song—some had

even done the serpentine dance. All was in readiness for the game.

"If he doesn't pitch me," murmured Weston, "I'll be——"

Mr. Hasbrook motioned to the umpire, who raised his megaphone to make the announcement.

CHAPTER XXI

EAGER HEARTS

"THE battery for Yale will be Weston and Kendall, and for Cornell——"

But the last announcement was given no heed by the supporters of the blue—at least by the players themselves, the substitutes, and Joe Matson in particular. A murmur went around.

"Weston! Weston's going to pitch!"

"After the work Baseball Joe's done too!"

"Why, Weston isn't in form."

"Oh, he's practiced hard lately."

"Yes, and he was doing some hot warming-up work a little while ago. I guess they'll pitch him all right."

"He must have put up a kick, and Hasbrook gave in to him."

"It looks so, and yet Horsehide generally doesn't play a man unless he can make good. That's Yale's way."

These were only a few of the comments that were being heard on all sides. The Yale team looked somewhat amazed, and then, lest their

enemies find out that they feared they had a weak spot, they braced up, smiled and acted as if it was a matter of course. And, as far as Cornell was concerned, they knew that there was rivalry between Weston and Joe, but as a pitcher is an uncertain quantity at best, they were not surprised that the 'varsity twirler whom they had faced the season before should again occupy the mound. It might be a part of the game to save Matson until later.

"Tough luck, Joe," said Spike, as he passed his friend.

"Yes—Oh, I don't know! I hadn't any right to expect to pitch!"

Joe tried to be brave about it, but there was a sore feeling in his heart. He had hoped to go into the game.

"Sure you had a right to expect it!" declared Spike. "You're the logical pitcher. There's been some funny work going on, I'm sure. Weston has pulled off something."

"Be careful, Spike."

"Oh, I'm sure of it. Why, look at Horsehide's face!"

Joe glanced at the head coach. Indeed the countenance of Mr. Hasbrook presented a study. He seemed puzzled as he turned away from a somewhat spirited conversation with Mr. Benson. For an instant his eyes met those of Joe,

and the young pitcher thought he read in them pity, and yet a trace of doubt.

"I wonder if he has lost confidence in me?" thought Joe. "I wonder if he thinks I can't pitch in a big game?"

Yet he knew in his own heart that he had not gone back—he was sure he could pitch better than he ever had before. The days at Yale, playing with young men who were well-nigh professionals, had given him confidence he had not possessed before, and he realized that he was developing good control of the ball, as well as speed and curves.

"I wonder why he didn't pitch me?" mused Joe.

"Play ball!" called the umpire, and the hearts of all were eager for the battle of stick and horsehide to begin. Cornell went to the bat first, and Weston faced his man. There was a smile of confidence on the pitcher's face, as he wound up, and delivered a few practice balls to Kendall. Then he nodded as if satisfied, and the batter stepped up to the plate.

"Strike!" called the umpire, at the first delivery, and there was a murmur of amazement. The batter himself looked a bit confused, but made no comment. The ball had gone cleanly over the plate, though it looked as if it was going to shoot wide, and the player had thought to let it pass. Weston smiled more confidently.

He was hit for a foul, but after getting three

and two he struck the batter out, and there was a round of applause.

"I couldn't have done it any better myself," said Joe, with honest praise for his rival.

"Wait," advised Spike. "Weston's got to last over eight more innings to make good, and he'll never do it."

But when he struck out the next man, and the third had retired on a little pop fly, Yale began to rise in her might and sing the beginning of a song of victory.

"Oh, we've got the goods!" her sons yelled.

"How's that for pitching?" demanded someone.

Joe joined in the cheer that was called for Weston, but his heart was still sore, for he felt that those cheers might have been for him. But he was game, and smiled bravely.

Yale managed to get one run during the last half of the first inning, and once more the sons of Eli arose and sent forth a storm of cheers, songs and college cries.

"Go back home, Cornell!" they screamed.

But the Cornell host smiled grimly. They were fighters from start to finish.

Joe noticed that Weston did not seem quite so confident when he came to the mound the second time. There was an exchange of signals between him and the catcher, and Weston seemed to be refusing to do what was wanted. After getting

three and two on his man, the batter sent out a high one that the left fielder was unable to connect with, and the runner reached second.

"Never mind, play for the next one," advised Kendall, and though the runner stole third, Weston pitched the second man out. Then, whether it was nervousness or natural inability cropping out at the wrong time, was not known, but the pitcher "went up in the air."

With only one out, and a man on third, he began to be hit for disastrous results. He made wild throws, and the whole team became so demoralized that costly errors were made. The result was that Cornell had four runs when the streak was stopped.

"We've got to do better than this," declared the head coach, as the Yale men came in to bat. "Rap out a few heavy ones. Show 'em what Yale can do in a pinch."

They tried, but Cornell was fighting mad now, with the scent of victory to urge her players on. The best Yale could do was two, leaving their opponents one ahead at the beginning of the third.

And then Weston went to pieces more than ever, though in the interval his arm had been rubbed and treated by the trainer. He had complained that it was stiff.

I shall not give all the details of that game. Yale wanted to forget it after it was over. But

when, at the ending of the fifth inning, the score stood eight to four in favor of Cornell there was a quick consultation among the coaches. What was said could not be heard, but Mr. Hasbrook seemed to be insisting on something to which the other two would not agree. Finally Horsehide threw up his hands in a gesture of despair.

"Avondale, take the mound!" he exclaimed.

"Avondale!" gasped the players. The scrub pitcher to go in and Joe, who was his master, kept on the bench? It was incredible.

"Well, what do you know about that?" demanded Spike. "I've a good notion to——"

"Be quiet!" begged Joe. "They know what they're doing."

But it seems they did not, for Avondale was worse by far than Weston had been. He was hit unmercifully, and three more runs came in. But he had to stick it out, and when the miserable inning for Yale ended he went dejectedly to the bench.

Weston, who had been having his arm rubbed again, and who had been practicing with a spare catcher, looked hopeful. But this time, following another conference of coaches, Mr. Hasbrook evidently had his way. Fairly running over to where Joe sat the head coach exclaimed:

"Quick—get out there and warm up. You'll

pitch the rest of the game. It's a forlorn hope, but we'll take it!"

Joe's face shone as he ripped off his sweater, grabbed up a ball and his mitt, and started for the practice stretch. His heart was in a tumult, but he calmed himself and began his work.

But it was too much to expect to pull the contest out of the fire by such desperate and late-day methods. In the part of the game he pitched Joe allowed but one hit, and with howls of delight his friends watched him mow down the Cornell batters. Not another run came in, but the lead of the visitors was too big, and Yale could not overcome it, though her sons did nobly, rising to the support of Joe in great style.

"Well, it's over," remarked Spike gleefully as he caught Joe's arm at the close of the contest.

"You seem glad that Yale lost," said the pitcher.

"Never! But I'm glad you showed 'em what you could do when you had the chance. If you'd gone in first Yale would have won!"

"Oh, you think so—do you?" sneered a voice behind them. They turned quickly, to see Ford Weston, scowling with rage.

"Yes, I do," declared Spike boldly.

"Then you've got another think coming!" was the retort. "I'm the 'varsity pitcher, and I'm going to hold on to the job!"

CHAPTER XXII

THE CRIMSON SPOT

"WHAT do you think of him, anyhow?" asked Spike of his room-mate, as Weston passed on. "Isn't he the limit!"

"He certainly doesn't seem to care much for me," replied Joe, with a grim smile. "But I suppose it's natural. Almost anyone would feel that way at the prospect of being replaced."

"Oh, he makes me tired!" exclaimed Spike. "He ought to stand for Yale—not for Ford Weston. It's the first time in a good many years that any player has placed himself above the team."

"But Weston hasn't done that yet."

"No, but that's what he's scheming for. He as good as said that he'll pitch for the 'varsity no matter what happens."

"Who's that? What's up?" asked another voice, and, turning, the two chums saw Ricky Hanover. "Oh, you're talking about Weston," he added, as he noted the defeated pitcher walking away. "What's he been saying?"

They told him, and Ricky, making a wry face, went on:

"So that's how things are; eh? Well, if Weston tries that sort of game, I can see the finish of the Yale nine. It'll be the tail end of the kite, and the championship will be in the soup. In fact it's beginning to gravitate that way now, with the loss of this Cornell game."

"But where does Weston get his pull?" demanded Spike. "How is it that they put him in to-day, when it was almost known that he couldn't make good. And here was Joe all ready to go on the mound. You saw what he did when he got there and yet——"

"Spare my blushes! I'm a modest youth!" laughed Joe.

"That's all right, there's something back of all this," continued Spike, vigorous in defence of his chum. "Why should the coaches put Weston in, and then, when he slumped, call on Avondale before they did you, Joe? It isn't right, and I think Horsehide should have made a better fight for you. You claim he's a friend of yours, Joe."

"Well, yes, in a way. And yet if I had to depend on his friendship to get on the mound I'd never go there. I want to stand on my own feet and have the right to pitch because I can do better than some other fellow. That's all I ask—a fair show. I don't want any favors, and Mr. Hasbrook isn't the man to give them to me, if I'd take them."

"I guess you're right there," commented Ricky.

"But what I can't understand," went on Spike, "is how Horsehide seemed to give in to the other two coaches. It was as plain as a flagpole that he didn't want to pitch Weston to-day, and yet he had to in spite of himself. Why was it?"

"Do you really want to know?" asked Ricky, and his voice was lowered, while he glanced around as if to make sure that no one would hear him save his two friends. "Do you really want to know?"

"Certainly," declared Spike, and Joe wondered what was coming.

"Well, it's because Weston is a member of the Anvil Club," said Ricky. "It's a class secret society, and it has a lot of influence—more so than even some of the big Senior clubs. Weston belongs and so do Horsehide and the other two coaches. They were in college, and they still keep up their affiliations. Now you know why they pitched Weston to-day—because he demanded it as a part of his right as a member of the Anvil Club."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Spike, "that the secret society is bigger than Yale—that it could make her lose a ball game?"

"No, not exactly," replied Ricky. "But it is powerful, and a member has an unwritten right to demand almost anything in reason of the other

members, and by their promises made they are obliged to help him."

"But this wasn't anything in reason," said Spike. "Joe should have pitched the game, and then we'd have won. It was unreasonable to let Weston go in."

"Look here!" exclaimed Ricky. "I don't mean to say that Yale men would do any underhand work to make any athletic contest go by the board. But you can't say, right off the bat, that Weston's demand was unreasonable. He thought he could pitch to a victory, and he probably said as much, very forcibly. It was a chance that he might, and, when he appealed for a try, on the ground that he was an Anvil man—they had to give it to him, that's all. It was all they could do, though I guess Horsehide didn't want to."

"But there's Avondale," went on Ricky. "What about him?"

"He's an Anvil man, too."

"And I'm not," broke in Joe. "Say," he asked with a laugh, "how do you join this society?"

"You don't," spoke Ricky solemnly. "You have to be asked, or tapped for it, just as for Wolf's Head, or Skull and Bones. Oh, it's an exclusive society all right, and as secret as a dark cellar."

"And you really know this to be so?" asked Spike, almost incredulously.

"Well, no one says so out and out, but I've heard rumors before, and to-day they were strong enough to hear without a megaphone. Oh, Weston's got the thing cinched all right."

"Then I haven't a chance," sighed Joe, and more than ever he regretted coming to Yale. Yet, deep in his heart, was a fierce desire to pitch the college to a championship.

"Haven't a chance!" cried Spike, indignantly. "Do you mean to say, Ricky, that they'll let Weston go on losing games the way he did to-day?"

"No, not exactly. But they'll pitch him because he will appeal to their society side, and bamboozle 'em into thinking that he has come back strong, and can sure win."

"And if he doesn't—if he slumps as he did to-day?"

"Then they'll put in Avondale or McAnish."

"And Joe won't get a show until last?" asked Spike.

"That's about the size of it."

"I don't believe so."

"All right. Just watch," said Ricky, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Of course," he went on, "the coaches may wake up to the fact before it's too late, or there may be such a howl made that they'll have to can the society plea. But it's a queer situation. Come on down to Glory's and we'll feed our faces."

"Wait until we get un-togged," suggested Spike, for he, too, had on a uniform, hoping for a chance to play. But it had not come.

It was late when Joe and his chum got back to their room. They had met congenial spirits at the popular resort, and a sort of post-mortem had been held over the game. But, though the faults of many players were pointed out, and though Joe received due praise for his work, little had been said of Weston's poor pitching.

"It's just as I told you," declared Ricky. "There are too many members of the Anvil Club, and affiliated societies, and they hate to hurt Weston's feelings, I guess."

The 'varsity pitcher was not present.

"Well, it sure is a queer state of affairs," commented Spike, as he and Joe reached their apartment. "I wish we could do something. It's a shame, with a pitcher who has your natural abilities, Joe, that——"

"Oh, forget it, old man, and go to sleep," advised Joe. "I'm much obliged for your interest in me, but maybe it will come out right after all."

"Humph! It won't unless we make it," murmured Spike.

The coaches tried some shifting about of players when the next practice came on, though Weston was still retained on the mound. Joe was told to go in at shortstop, and he made good there,

more by hard work than natural ability, for he wanted to show that he would do his duty wherever he was placed. Weston seemed to be doing better, and he got into more plays, not being content to merely pitch.

"We'll trim Harvard!" was the general opinion, and Yale stock, that had gone down, took an upward move.

The Harvard game was soon to come—one of the contests in the championship series, though Yale generally regarded the fight with Princeton as the deciding test.

It was one afternoon following some sharp practice, when the 'varsity seemed on edge, that Joe said to Spike:

"Come on, let's take a walk. It's too nice to go back and bone."

"All right—I'm with you. We'll get out in the country somewhere."

Weston passed as this was said, and though he nodded to the two, there was no cordiality in it.

Joe and Spike thoroughly enjoyed their little excursion, and it was almost dusk when they returned. As they entered their room, Ricky came out to greet them.

"What have you fellows been doing?" he demanded. "I came in to have a chat, and I found your room empty. A little later I heard you in it, and then, after I had found my pipe which I

dropped under the bed, and went in again, you weren't to be seen. Yet I was sure I heard you moving about in it."

"We haven't been home since practice," declared Spike.

"You say you heard someone in our room?" inquired Joe.

"I sure did."

"Maybe it was Hoppy."

"No, for I asked him, and he said no."

"Any messages or letters left?" asked Spike, looking around, but no missives were in sight.

"Oh, well, maybe it was spooks," declared Joe. "I'm going to get on something comfortable," and he went to the clothes closet, presently donning an old coat and trousers. Ricky made himself comfortable in an armchair, and the three talked for some time.

"I say, what's that on your sleeve?" asked Ricky of Joe during a pause. "It looks like red ink. See, you've smeared Spike's trigonometry with it."

"Quit it, you heathen!" exclaimed the aggrieved one.

"Red ink," murmured Joe, twisting his sleeve around to get a look at the crimson spot. He touched it with his finger. "It's paint—red paint!" he exclaimed, "and it's fresh!"

CHAPTER XXIII

JOE'S TRIUMPH

"RED paint!" exclaimed Ricky.

"Who put it there?" asked Spike, and he looked queerly at Joe.

"Not I," replied the pitcher. "And yet it's fresh. I can't understand. You say you heard someone in here, Ricky?"

"As sure as guns."

"Maybe it was some of those pesky Freshies trying some of their funny work," suggested Spike.

"Hazing and tricks are about over," came from Joe, as he looked more closely at the red spot. "And yet someone seems to have been in here, daubing up my clothes. I wonder if they tried it on any more? Lucky it was an old suit."

He looked in the closet, but the coat, with the crimson spot on the sleeve, seemed to be the only one soiled.

"I have it!" suddenly cried Spike.

"What, for cats' sake?" asked Ricky.

"It's good luck!"

"Good luck?" demanded Joe. "How do you make that out? These aren't my glad rags, that's a fact, but still paint is paint, and I don't want it daubed all over me. Good luck? Huh!"

"Of course it is," went on Spike. "Don't you see? That's red—Harvard's hue. We play them next week, you'll pitch and we've got their color already. Hurray! We're going to win! It's an omen!"

"Cæsar's pineapples!" exclaimed Ricky. "So it is. I'm going to grind out a song on it," and, having rather a knack with verse, he was soon scribbling away in rhyme. "How's this?" he demanded a few minutes later. "Listen fellows, and pick out a good tune for it," and he recited:

"We've got Harvard's colors,
We'll tell it to you.
The red always runs
At the sight of the blue.
So cheer boys, once more,
This bright rainbow hue,
The Red will turn purple
When mixed with the blue!"

"Eh? How's that?" he asked proudly. "Pretty nifty I guess! Your Uncle Pete isn't so slow. I'm going to have the fellows practice this for the game, when you pitch, Joe."

"Maybe I won't."

"Oh, yes you will. But what do you think of it?"

"Rotten!" exclaimed Spike.

"Punk!" was the opinion of Slim Jones, who had entered in time to hear the verse. "Disinfect it, Ricky."

"Aw, you fellows are jealous because you can't sling the muse around when you want to. Guess I'll try a second spasm."

"Not in here," declared Spike, quickly. "This is a decent, law-abiding place, and, so far, has a good reputation. I'm not going to have the Dean raiding it just because you think you're a poet. That stuff would give our English Lit. prof. a chill. Can it, Ricky, can it."

"You're jealous, that's all," and despite the protest Ricky proceeded to grind out a second verse, that he insisted on reading to his audience, which, by this time had increased to half a dozen lads from neighboring rooms. There was quite a jolly little party, and Ricky demanded that they sing his new song, which they finally did, with more or less success.

The strains wafted out of doors and passing students were attracted by the sound until the place was swarming with congenial spirits, and nothing was talked of but the coming game with Harvard.

"It's queer though, about that red paint," said Spike, later that night, when he and Joe were alone.

"It sure is," agreed the pitcher.

"Maybe Hoppy sent someone around to do a bit of daubing, and the chap got in here by mistake," suggested his chum. But inquiry developed that this was not so, and the mystery remained unsolved for a time.

But after he got in bed, Joe did some hard thinking. He recalled the red paint episode of the spoiled manuscript, and wondered, without believing, if Weston could have come to his room.

"He might have," reflected Joe, "and he might have had a hardened spot of red paint on his clothes from daubing it on the steps that time. If the hardened upper crust rubbed off, it would leave a fresh spot that might have gotten on my coat. And yet what would he be doing in my closet, let alone in the room here? No, it can't be that. Unless he sneaked in here—knowing Spike and I would be away—looking for something to use against me.

"He doesn't want me to pitch, that's a fact, and if he could find something against me he'd use it. But he can't. I'm glad I'm not a candidate for any of their queer secret societies here, or I'd be worrying about them not asking me to join. I'm

going to keep out of it. But that red spot is sure queer."

All Yale was on edge on the day before the Harvard game, which was to take place on the Cambridge diamond. The team and the substitutes were trained to the minute, and all ready to make the trip, together with nearly a thousand "rooters" who were going along to lend moral support. Particular pains had been taken with the pitching staff, and Joe, Weston, McAnish and Avondale had been worked to the limit. They had been coached as they never had been before, for Yale wanted to win this game.

As yet it was not known who would pitch. At least the 'varsity candidates did not know, and Joe was hoping for at least half a game. He was modest, for Weston arrogantly declared that he would last the nine innings. His friends said little, but he had a certain power in college not to be overlooked.

The stadium was thronged with spectators as the teams trotted out for a little warming-up practice. In the cheering stands for the wearers of the blue the locomotive cry, the Boola song, a new one —"Bulldog Grit!"—and Ricky's effusion were gone over again. "Hit the Line!" came as a retort, and the cheerers tried to outdo each other.

"Do you think you'll pitch, Joe?" asked Spike,

in a low tone, as he and his chum practised off to one side.

"I don't know. There are all sorts of rumors going about. I'd like to—I guess you know how much—just as you would like to catch—but we can't always have what we want. The coaches are having a talk now. Weston seems pretty confident.

"Yes, the cad! I wish he'd play fair."

"Oh, well," said Joe, with an air of resignation, "I suppose he can't help it. I guess I shouldn't like it if I'd pitched for a year, and then found a new man trying for my place."

"But if the new man was better than you, and it meant the winning of the game?" asked Spike, as he took a vicious ball that Joe slugged to him.

"Oh, well, of course in theory the best man ought to play—that's not saying I'm the best man by a long shot!" Joe hastened to add; "but even in theory it's hard to see another man take your place."

"Something's doing," said Spike suddenly. "The conference has broken up."

Joe looked nervously to where the coaches and captain had been talking. Tom Hatfield was buttoning on his shortstop glove, and then taking it off again as though under a strain.

He walked over to the umpire, and Weston, seeing him, made a joking remark to a companion. He started for the players' bench, for Harvard

was to bat last, and Yale would come up first for the stick-work.

"It looks like him," remarked Spike in a low voice.

"Well, I'll be ready when they call me," said Joe, with a good nature he did not feel.

The umpire raised his megaphone. There was a hush, and then came the hollow tones:

"Batteries for to-day. Harvard: Elkert and Snyder—Yale: Matson and Kendall."

"By Halifax!" cried Spike, clapping Joe on the back with such force that he nearly knocked over his chum. "You pitch, old man!"

CHAPTER XXIV

HARD LUCK

SHOUTS and yells greeted the announcement of the umpire—cheers from the admirers of the respective batteries.

"Yah!" voiced the wearers of the crimson. "That's our one best bower! Oh you Elkert! Tear 'em apart, Snyder!"

Back came the challenge from the sons of Yale.

"You're our meat, Harvard! Keep your eye on the ball—that's all you'll be able to do. Fool 'em, Matson. 'Rah for Baseball Joe!"

Our hero was becoming quite a favorite with his classmates, many of whom now knew of his one ambition. But Kendall had his admirers too.

"He eats 'em alive—Shorty Kendall does!" came the cry. "Look out for our bear-cats, Harvard!"

Once more came a riot of cheers and songs, each college group striving its best to outdo the other, giving its favorite cries or songs.

"Come, get together, you two, and make sure

you don't have any mix-up on signals," exclaimed Mr. Hasbrook to Joe and the catcher. "We want to win this game. And, Joe, don't forget what I told you about getting in on all the plays you can. We'll need every man if we take this game. Harvard has several good twirlers, and she's been playing like a house afire. Watch yourselves."

"Then I'm really going to pitch?" asked Joe. It was almost the only thing he had said since hearing the announcement, after Spike had clapped him on the back with such force.

"Pitch! Of course you're going to pitch," declared the head coach. "And I want you to pitch your head off. But save your arm, for there are going to be more games than this. But, mind!" and he spoke with earnestness. "You've got to make good!"

"I will!" exclaimed Joe, and he meant it.

"Come over here," suggested Shorty. "Plug in a few and we'll see if you're as good as you were yesterday," for Joe and he had had considerable practice, as, in fact, had all the pitchers, including Weston. As for that lad, when he heard the announcement a scowl shot across his face, and he uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked De Vere, who had become rather intimate with Ford of late.

"Matter! Isn't there enough when that—when he pitches?" and he nodded his head toward Joe.

"Why; do you think they'll get his goat, or that he'll blow, and throw the game?"

"He might," sneered Weston, "but I have a right to be on the mound to-day. I was half promised that I could pitch, and now, at the last minute, they put him in. I'm not going to stand for it!"

"It's a sort of a raw deal," declared his friend. "I don't see why they let such fellows as he come to college. First we know there'll be a lot of hod-carriers' sons here instead of gentlemen," and De Vere turned up, as far as possible, the point of his rather stubby nose. He himself was the son of a man who had gotten his start as a contractor, employing those same "hod-carriers" at whom the son now sneered.

"That's right," agreed Weston. "I should think they could keep Yale a little more exclusive."

"I agree with you," came from the other. "Why I even understand that they are talking of forming a club where even those who eat at commons, and are working their way through, can join. It's going to be fierce. But none of them will get in the Blue Ribbon Association," he added, referring to an exclusive college organization.

"Nor the Anvil Club either," added Weston. "This is all Hasbrook's fault. He's taken some silly notion to Matson, and he thinks he's a wonderful pitcher. It seems they met somewhere, and

Matson did him a favor. Now he's taking advantage of it."

"But he can pitch," said De Vere, who, for all his snobbishness, was inclined to be fair.

"Yes, after a fashion, but he hasn't anything on me. I won against Harvard last year."

"So you did."

"And I could do it again."

"I believe you. Anyhow I think only the fellows in our own class—socially—should play. It makes it rather awkward, don't you know, if you meet one of the team out anywhere, and he isn't in your set. You've got to notice him, or there'd be a howl, I s'pose; but really some of the fellows are regular clod-hoppers, and this Matson doesn't train in with us."

"You're right. But if things go the way I think he may not last very long."

"How do you mean? Will he put up such a rotten game that they won't stand for him?"

"That's all I can say now," rejoined Weston, somewhat mysteriously. "But something may happen."

"And you'll pitch?"

"I hope so. I may get in this game, for I did beat Harvard one year." But Weston forgot to add that he pitched so wretchedly the remainder of the season that Yale finished a poor third, losing the championship.

"Play ball!" called the umpire. Those who had been practicing straggled to the bench, or walked out to take their fielding positions.

"I guess you'll do," declared Kendall to Joe, with a nod of encouragement. "Don't let 'em get your Angora."

"I'll try not to," came the smiling answer. "Are they hard hitters?"

"They are if they get the ball right, but it's up to you not to let 'em. Give 'em twisters and teasers."

"Play ball," called the umpire again, and the first of the Yale batsmen took his place. Once more came the yells and cheers, and when the lad struck out, which he did with an ease that chagrined his mates, there was derisive yelling from the Harvard stands.

"Two more and we've got 'em going!" was shouted.

But Jimmie Lee, the dimutive first baseman, was up next, and perhaps the Harvard pitcher did not think him a worthy foeman. At any rate Jimmie caught a ball just where he wanted it, and rapped out a pretty two-bagger.

"That's the way! Come on in!" was shouted at him, but Jimmie caught the signal to hug the half-way station, and stayed there. He stole third while they were throwing his successor out at first, and this made two down, with Jimmie ready to

come in on half a chance. But the Harvard pitcher tightened up, and the fourth man succumbed to a slow twister on his final strike, making the third out, so that poor Jimmie expired on the last sack.

"Now, Joe, show 'em that we can do better than that," begged Shorty, as he donned mask and protector. "Throw me a few and warm up. Then sting 'em in!"

Joe was a bit nervous as he went to the box, but he managed to control himself. He seemed to guess just what kind of a ball would fool the batter, and, after two balls had been called on him, sent over two in succession that were named strikes.

"That's the way we do it!" yelled a Yale admirer, in a high-pitched voice. "One more and he's done."

But the one more did not come. Instead, apparently getting the ball just where he wanted it, the Harvard man swung on it to the tune of three sacks, amid a wild riot of cheers.

"Now we've got 'em going!" came Harvard's triumphant yells, and Joe felt the hot blood rush to his face. Kendall saw it, and, guessing the pitcher's state of mind, walked out to the box and whispered:

"Don't mind. That was a fluke. It won't happen again. Hold on to yourself—tighten up and we'll get 'em."

Joe felt better after that bit of advice, and was

calmer when he wound up for the next batter. Though he had been told that Harvard would play a foxy game, he was hardly prepared for what followed. The next player up hit lightly, for a sacrifice, thinking to bring in the run. As it happened, Joe stumbled as he raced to pick up the twisting ball, and though he managed to recover himself, and throw home, while on his knees, the man racing from third beat the throw and the first run for Harvard was in. Then such cheering as there was!

Yale was nonplussed for the moment, and her rooters in the stands sat glum and silent. But the spirit of the blue could not long be kept down, and soon the Boola song came booming over the field. It cheered Joe mightily, even though he saw the sneering look on the face of Weston, who sat on the bench, hoping for a chance to supplant him.

"Here's where we walk away!" crowed a Harvard man, but the wearers of the crimson did not, for that run was the only one they got that inning. But it was a start, and it looked big below the goose egg that adorned Yale's score.

The game went on, varyingly. Yale managed to get two runs in the fifth inning, putting her one ahead, for Joe had done such good work, aided by the rest of the team, when a hit was made, that Harvard had not scored again.

"Matson's pitching a great game!" exclaimed Mr. Hasbrook, as he watched eagerly. "I told

you we wouldn't make any mistake if we let him go in first," and he looked at his colleagues.

"But that was a costly fumble," declared Mr. Benson.

"Yes, but no one is perfect. Besides we're ahead."

"Only one run."

"That's enough to win the game."

"But hardly with four more innings to go," rejoined Mr. Whitfield, dubiously.

"Look at that!" exclaimed Mr. Hasbrook, in excitement, as Joe grabbed a hot liner and whipped it over to first in time to catch the man napping there. "Matson's more than just a pitcher."

"You seem interested in him," spoke Mr. Benson.

"I am. I think Joe is going to make one of the finest ball players we've ever had at Yale. He hasn't found himself yet, of course, and he needs more judgment. But he's got a future. I think we'll hear of him somewhere else besides on a college team, too."

"I understand he has professional ambitions," admitted Mr. Benson. "But he's got a hard life ahead of him."

"Oh, he'll make good!" declared Mr. Hasbrook.

And it seemed that Joe was going to in this game. He was pitching wonderfully well, and

Harvard only found him for scattering hits.

On her part Yale was doing very well. Harvard had tried another pitcher when she found that her first one was being pounded, but it availed little, and when the ninth inning closed, as far as the wearers of the blue were concerned, they were two runs ahead.

"We've got 'em! We've got 'em!" yelled Shorty with delight, capering about Joe. "All you've got to do is to hold 'em down!"

"Yes—all—but that's a lot," declared the pitcher. "They're going to play fierce now."

"But they need three runs to win. You can hold 'em down!"

"I'll try," promised Joe, as he went to the mound.

It looked as if he was going to make good, but luck, that element that is always present in games, especially in baseball, deserted the blue for the red. The first man up knocked a long, high fly to deep centre. So sure was he, as well as everyone else, that it would be caught, that the player hardly ran, but the ball slipped through the fingers of Ed. Hutchinson as if it had been greased, and the man was safe on second.

"Now we've got 'em going," came the cry. "A couple more hits and we've got the game."

Joe was wary, but he was playing against experienced youths, and when he found the man on

second trying to steal third he threw down, hoping to catch him. His throw was wild, the baseman jumped for it in vain, and the runner went on to third.

"Never mind—play for the batter," advised Shorty.

Joe did, but somehow he could not get the right twist on the ball. He was hit for a single, and the man on third scored.

"Two more and we've got 'em!" yelled the delighted wearers of the crimson. "None down yet."

Then, whether it was the effect of luck, or because the Yale team was hypnotized by the wearers of the crimson, was not manifest; but certain it was that the blue players went to pieces. It was not Joe's fault—at least not all his, though he made one error. But this seemed to affect all the Yale team, and the result was a wild finish on the part of Harvard that put them two runs to the good, winning the game.

"Hard luck!" exclaimed Shorty, in a dejected voice, as he took off his glove and mask. "Hard luck!"

CHAPTER XXV

AT WEST POINT

"We'd a right to that game!"

"Sure we had."

"And we did have it in the refrigerator, only it got out through the drain pipe, I guess."

"It's tough luck!"

The Yale team and its admirers—no, in this case its sympathizers—were coming off the field after the Harvard defeat. All sorts of comments, excuses, philosophical expressions, and revilings at fate, were heard. Joe said but little, though he thought much. Every error—every little point he had missed—seemed to stand out glaringly.

"Never mind, old man!"

It was Spike who spoke, putting his arm affectionately around his chum's shoulders.

"I—I can't help it," replied the pitcher, bitterly. "We lost the game."

"That's just it—we did—not you. Cæsar's ghost, man! You can't carry the whole blame of losing the game, any more than you can claim the

whole credit when we win. It's all in the day's work."

"I know, but——"

"'But me no buts,' now Joe. Just brace up. This is only one of the championship games. There are more to come, and we'll get enough to put us on top of the heap. I only wish I had your chances to perform in public."

"I wish you had, Spike. But I guess this was my last chance."

"Nonsense! They'll play you again. Why Weston—or Avondale either, for that matter—woudn't have done half as well, I think."

"Oh, so that's your opinion; is it?" snapped a voice behind them. There was no need to turn to know that Weston was there, and it took but a glance to show that he was frowning and sneering.

"It sure is," retorted Spike, sturdily, for he was not afraid to air his opinions.

"Well, you've got another think coming," snapped Weston. "I'll pitch a game pretty soon, and show you what's what."

Joe did not make reply, but he wondered if Weston's words held significance.

"Maybe they won't let me pitch after this," he mused. Spike, reading his thoughts, said:

"Now don't you go to thinking gloomy thinks, Joe. You're all right if you only believe so. Have some confidence in yourself."

"I have, but after the way things went to pieces in the last inning I don't know what to think."

"Oh, bosh! If you'd had anything like decent support it never would have happened. Hutchinson mufling that ball started us down hill."

"That's what!" chimed in Jimmie Lee, coming along just then. "This is only one game—the fortunes of war. We'll beat 'em next time; wallop Princeton, and take the championship."

"West Point is next on the list," went on Joe. "I wonder what sort of a game they play?"

"Like clockwork," explained Spike. "I saw one, once, and they put it all over Yale. But we've got to win this one."

"That's what!" declared Jimmie. "I say, I know a nice place where we can get a dandy rabbit. Let's stay over to-night. I can stand some cuts, we'll take in a show, and have supper after it. Come on, and we can go to New Haven in the morning."

"No, I guess I'll go back with the team," said Joe, slowly. "They might think I was trying to dodge if I sneaked off. I'll go back with the rest."

"All right—then we'll go to Glory's and have a feed," insisted Jimmie. "I've got to do something to raise my spirits."

They went to the dressing rooms, and soon the players and their friends were moving to the hotel where they had stopped.

Yale had cheered her successful rivals, and had been cheered in turn, and now, as the team walked through the Cambridge streets they heard, on all sides of them, the jubilant expressions that told of joy over the victory. To Joe it was gall and wormwood, for, in spite of the efforts of his friends to make him feel better, he half blamed himself for the defeat.

On the way home in the special train he was gloomy and silent, but later, when he and his chums went to the well-known resort, and heard the Yale songs, and saw the jolly faces of the students—jolly in spite of the defeat—he felt better.

"It's only once in a while that the bulldog loses his grip," declared Ricky Hanover. "We'll get a strangle hold on the rest of the games and come out on top of the heap."

College life resumed its usual routine after this big game. There were others in prospect, though, and practice went on unceasingly.

Joe half feared he would be displaced from his position on the 'varsity, but he was not. True, Weston and Avondale were called on at times, for the policy of the coaches was to have the best pitchers always in reserve. But Joe seemingly was the first one to be called on. Nor did Mr. Hasbrook reproach him, personally, for the defeat.

All the players received a calling down for their

loose methods in the Harvard game, and their faults were pointed out in no uncertain fashion. In a way the loss of the contest did good, for, following it, the practice was snappier than it had been in a long while.

"We want to defeat the army lads!" exclaimed the head coach a few days before the West Point game.

Contrary to the general custom the two who were to pitch and catch were announced the night before. It was at a meeting of the team, during which the coaches gave some good advice. Joe saw Weston in close conversation with Mr. Benson and Mr. Whitfield, and he had a fear that the deposed pitcher was trying to "pull strings" and make a place for himself.

"Of course you'll pitch, Matson," said Mr. Hasbrook, in such a matter-of-fact voice that Joe was rather startled. "And Kendall will catch."

There was a murmur, possibly at the remembrance of the Harvard game, but no one said anything. Joe, who sat beside Spike, whispered:

"I wonder when you'll get your chance?"

"Oh, some day, maybe," was the answer. "I can wait. I'm glad you've had yours."

"I must make good, though," declared Joe, half fearful that he would not.

They arrived at West Point to be enthusiastically greeted by the cadets, who took charge of the

team, the substitutes and the "rooters" in right royal fashion. A big crowd had assembled, and as the day was a fine one there was every prospect of a game that would be all that was desired.

"I wonder if we'll win?" mused Joe, as he got into his uniform and started out on the field. The cadets were already at practice, and showed up well.

"A fine, snappy lot of fellows," observed Jimmie Lee. "We've got our work cut out all right."

"That's what," declared Hen Johnson.

As Joe left the dressing room, he saw Weston talking to Mr. Benson, who was having a conversation with the trainer. The former 'varsity pitcher—who was now second choice it seemed—was much excited, and as Joe passed he heard Weston say:

"Well, I want half the game, anyhow. Can't I have it?"

"I—I'll see what I can do," replied Mr. Benson. "I'll do all I can."

"I'm tired of playing second fiddle," snapped Weston, as he drifted out behind a knot of players. Joe began to think of many things.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SORE ARM

YALE won the toss and chose to go to the bat last—always an advantage it seems—so Joe had to go on the mound as soon as practice was concluded. The usual practice of the home team batting last did not prevail on this occasion.

The stands were filled with a mass of spectators, in which pretty girls seemed to predominate. At least Joe assumed that they were pretty for they had escorts who looked on them with eyes that seemed to bear witness to this designation. Many of them were "stunning," to quote De Vere, who took a position in the outfield during practice.

"Just so he could be nearer some of the girls," declared Jimmie Lee, who had the reputation of being a "woman hater."

"Some crowd," remarked Joe to Spike.

"Yes, and a good one, too," declared Joe's room-mate. "It isn't all howling for Yale blood. There are a lot of old grads. here to-day, as well as a lot of army men, and we've got our friends

with us. You've got to play for all you're worth."

"I intend to," declared Joe, "but——"

"Now there you go!" interrupted his chum. "Getting doubtful of yourself. Stop it, I tell you! Just make up your mind that you're going to make good and you will. These fellows are only human, and, though they've got the game down to a fine point, and play together like machinery, on account of their drill practice, yet baseball is always uncertain. Yale luck is bound to turn up sooner or later."

"It had better be sooner then," remarked Joe, with a grim smile. "Two defeats, hand running, would about put me out of business. I'd resign."

"Nonsense!" declared Spike. "You can make good all right. Remember that Weston is just hankering for a chance to displace you, so don't give it to him. Hold on to the mound."

"I intend to. And yet I heard something that set me thinking," and Joe related what he had inadvertently listened to, adding:

"I may be taken out after two innings."

"Not much!" declared Spike emphatically. "I see what's going on. Weston is trying to work his society pull and get the trainers to pitch him. The cad!"

"Well, I can't find the heart to blame him," said Joe, softly.

"I can," snapped Spike. "He's putting himself above the team."

"Well, maybe it will all come out right," said Joe, but his tone did not support his words, for he ended with a doleful sigh.

"Oh, you get out!" cried Spike cheerfully. "You've got the losing bugaboo in a bad form. Cheer up—the worst is yet to come."

"Yes, a defeat," murmured Joe, and then Spike hit him such a thump in the back that the pitcher had to gasp to recover his breath, and in doing so he forgot some of his gloomy thoughts.

The practice went on over the field, until the umpire called the captains together for the final conference, and an agreement on the ground rules. These were adjusted satisfactorily, and once more the inspiring cry rang out:

"Play ball!"

"Get 'em over, Joe," advised Shorty Kendall, as the young pitcher walked out to his place. "Shoot 'em in good and hard, but keep 'em over the plate. I know this umpire. He's fair, but he's careful. You'll have to work for all the strikes you get."

"And I'm willing to," declared Joe.

Somehow his confidence was coming back, and as he caught the new ball which the umpire tossed to him, he felt that he could pitch as he never had before. He was aware of the scowling glance of

Weston, who sat on the bench, and, as Joe stooped over to rub some dirt on the ball, to render it less slippery, he wondered if the deposed pitcher had so managed to "pull strings" as to gain his end.

"Anyhow, I'll pitch as long as I can," thought Joe with grim determination.

The game started. There was nothing remarkable about it, at least at first, so I shall not weary you with details of the strikes, balls, the sliding for bases, the decisions, and the runs. Sufficient to say that at first neither side could score. Joe and the rival pitcher were in good form, and, aside from scattering hits, which were usually only good for a single bag, little was done.

For four innings neither side scored a run, though on one decision of the umpire, when Joe came sliding home on a sacrifice by Jimmie Lee, and was called out, there was a howl of protest.

"Robber!"

"Blind man!"

"He was safe by a yard!"

"Don't give it!" were some of the mildest epithets and expressions of opinion hurled at the umpire.

"Hold on! That isn't Yale's way," said the captain quietly. "It's all right," and the decision stood, though had it been otherwise it would have meant a run for Yale.

And so the game went on until the eighth inning, which put West Point one run ahead. There was excitement on the part of the army and its supporters, for in the last half of it Yale had been unable to score, and it looked as if she might lose.

"We've got to get 'em!" declared Captain Hatfield grimly, as he and his men took the field for the beginning of the ninth. "Don't let one get past you, Joe, and then we'll bat out two runs."

The young pitcher nodded, but he did not smile. He was a little in doubt of himself, for there was a strange numb feeling in his right arm, and he knew that the muscles were weakening. He had worked himself to the limit, not only in this game, but the one with Harvard, and now he began to pay the penalty.

Once or twice as he wound up to deliver he felt a sharp twinge that alarmed him. He had not asked to have one of the professional rubbers with the team massage him, for fear the rumor would get out that Yale's pitcher was weakening. So he bore it as best he could. But his arm was sore.

Joe had struck out one man, and then he was found for a two-bagger. This man was a notorious base stealer and managed to get to third, while the player following him, who was the heaviest hitter on the team, had been passed by Joe on a signal from the captain, who did not want to take chances.

JOE, WITH A MIGHTY EFFORT, THREW TO KENDALL.

"He's afraid!" came the taunt, and Joe was beginning to get nervous, especially as his pain increased.

With two on bases, and only one out, Joe saw come to the bat a man who was an expert bunter. He could lay the ball almost anywhere he wanted to, and our hero realized that he was in for a bad few minutes. It would not do to walk another. He must get this man.

What he had feared came to pass. The player bunted and the ball came lazily rolling toward the pitcher. Joe and Kendall started for it, and then Joe yelled:

"I'll get it—go back!"

He felt himself slipping on a pebble, but recovered with a wrench that strained his sore arm. With an effort he managed to get the ball. He knew that if he threw it from the unnatural and disadvantageous position he had assumed in recovering it, he would make his sore arm worse. But there was no help for it.

The man on third had started for home. Joe, with a mighty effort, threw to Kendall, who caught it and tagged his quarry.

"Out!" called the umpire. One run was saved.

Then, like a flash the catcher threw to third, for the man who had been on first, having reached second, rather imprudently tried for another bag. He was tagged there by as neat a double play as could

be desired, and the West Pointers had finished, with but the one run to their advantage.

"We need one to tie and two to win," exclaimed Shorty to Joe, as he tossed his big mitt into the air. "Why," he added, "what's the matter with your arm?" for he saw it hanging down limp.

"A strain," replied Joe shortly. "I'm all right."

"You are not! McLeary must look at you. We'll play somebody else this inning. You go get rubbed." And Joe was glad enough to do so.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ACCUSATION

YALE won from West Point. It was almost a foregone conclusion after that sensational inning when Joe went down and out with his sprained arm, after saving the game. His mates rallied to the support of, not only himself, but the whole team, and, the cadets, having been held runless, the wearers of the blue made a determined stand.

Weston was called on to go in and replace Joe, and the former 'varsity pitcher, in spite of his feeling against our hero, had that in him which made him do his best in spite of the odds against him.

Weston was half hoping that the game would be a tie, which would give him a chance to go on the mound and show what he could do at pitching against a formidable opponent of Yale. But it was not to be, though he brought in one of the winning runs for the New Haven bulldog.

The crowd went wild when they saw what a game fight the visitors were putting up, and even

the supporters of the army lads hailed them with delight as they pounded the cadet pitcher, for everyone likes to see a good play, no matter if it is made by the other side.

"Oh, wow! A pretty hit!" yelled the throng as Weston sent a two-bagger well out in the field. His face flushed with pleasure, as he speeded around, and, probably, had he been taken in hand then, subsequent events might not have happened, for his unreasonable hatred against Joe might have been dissipated. But no one did, and the result was that Weston felt he had been wrongly treated, and he resolved to get even.

"Well played, boys, well played!" exclaimed the captain of the cadets, as he came up to shake hands with Hatfield. "You did us up good and proper. We can't buck such a pitcher as you have. What happened to him!"

"Sprained arm," explained Spike, who stood near.

"Too bad! Tell him to take care of it," rejoined the cadet. "Such twirlers as he is are few and far between. Well, you beat us, but that's no reason why you can do it again. We'll have your scalps next year. Now, boys, altogether! Show 'em how West Pointers can yell."

The cheer for the Yale team broke out in a gladsome yell, tinged with regret, perhaps, for West Point had been sure of winning, especially

toward the end, but there was no ill-feeling showing in the cries that echoed over the field.

In turn the New Haven bulldog barked his admiration of the gallant opponents, and then came a special cheer for Joe Matson, whose plucky play had made it possible for Yale to win.

Joe, in the dressing room, heard his name, and flushed with delight. Trainer McLeary was rubbing his sore arm.

"Hurt much?" the man asked, as he massaged the strained muscles.

"Some," admitted Joe, trying not to wince as the pain shot along his arm. "How are we making out?"

"We win," decleared McLeary, as a scout brought him word. "And you did it."

"Not by pitching," asserted Joe.

"No, perhaps not. But every game isn't won by pitching. There are lots of other plays besides that. Now you've got to take care of this arm."

"Is it bad?"

"Bad enough so you can't use it right away. You've got to have a rest. You've torn one of the small ligaments slightly, and it will have to heal. No baseball for you for a week."

"No!" cried Joe aghast.

"No, sir! Not if you want to play the rest of the season," replied the trainer.

Now Joe did want to finish out the season,

whether he came back to Yale or not, for there were big games yet in prospect, particularly that with Princeton, and, if it was necessary to play a third one, it would take place on the big New York Polo Grounds.

"And, oh! if I could only pitch before that crowd!" thought Joe, in a moment of anticipated delight.

"There, I guess you'll do, if you keep it well wrapped up, stay out of draughts and don't use it," said the trainer finally, as he bound up Joe's twirling wing. "No practice, even, for a week, and then very light."

Joe half groaned, and made a wry face, but there was no help for it, he realized that. He was surrounded by his mates, as the game ended, and many were the congratulations, mingled with commiserations, as they greeted him.

Weston even condescended to say:

"Hope you won't be knocked out long, old man."

"Thanks," replied Joe dryly. "It'll be a week anyhow."

"A week!" exclaimed Weston, and he could not keep the delight from showing on his face. Then he hurried off to see one of the coaches. Joe had little doubt what it meant. Weston was going to try for his old place again while Joe was unable to pitch.

"Well," remarked De Vere, as his crony came out of the dressing rooms, whither he had gone. "I should think you could drop your other game, now that's he out of it."

"Not much!" exclaimed Weston, with some passion. "This won't last. He'll be back pitching again, and do me out of it. What I'm going to do won't hurt him much, and it will give me a chance. I'm entitled to it."

"I guess you are, old man."

The Yale team went back jubilant, and there was a great celebration in New Haven when the ball nine arrived. Fires were made, and the campus as well as the streets about the college were thronged with students. There were marches, and songs, and Joe Matson's name was cheered again and again.

Meanwhile our hero was not having a very delightful time. Not only was he in pain, but he worried lest the injury to his arm prove permanent.

"If I shouldn't be able to pitch again!" he exclaimed to Spike, in their room.

"Forget it!" advised the other. "You'll be at it again in a little while. Just take it easy."

And Joe tried to, but it was hard work. It was galling to go to practice and watch others play the game while he sat and looked on—especially

when Weston was pitching. But there was no help for it.

And then, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, it came.

The week had passed and Joe, who had done some light practice, was sent in to pitch a couple of innings against the scrub. Weston was pulled out, and he went to the bench with a scowl.

"I'll get him yet," he muttered to De Vere. "He's put me out of it again."

"I'd go slow," was the advice.

"It's been slow enough as it is," growled the other.

The day for the first Princeton game was at hand. It was to be played at Yale, and everyone was on edge for the contest. Joe was practically slated to pitch, and he felt his responsibility. His arm was in good shape again.

The night before the game the Dean sent for Joe to come to his office.

"What's up now?" demanded Spike, as his friend received the summons. "Have you won a scholarship, or is the Dean going to beg of you not to throw the game?"

"Both, I guess," answered Joe with a laugh. In his heart he wondered what the summons meant. He was soon to learn.

"I have sent for you, Mr. Matson," said the Dean gravely, "to enable you to make some an-

swer to a serious accusation that has been brought against you."

"What is it?" faltered the pitcher.

"Do you remember, some time ago," the Dean went on, "that some red paint was put on the steps of the house of one of the professors? The gentleman slipped, fell in the paint, and a very rare manuscript was ruined. Do you remember?"

"Yes," answered Joe quietly, wondering if he was to be asked to tell what he knew.

"Well," went on the Dean, "have you anything to confess?"

"Who, me? Confess? Why, no, sir," answered Joe. "I don't know what you mean."

"Then I must tell you. You have been accused of putting the red paint on the steps, and, unless you prove yourself innocent you can take no further part in athletics, and you may be suspended."

CHAPTER XXVIII

VINDICATION

Joe fairly staggered back, so startled was he by the words of the Dean — and, not only the words, but the manner—for the Dean was solemn, and there was a vindictiveness about him that Joe had never seen before.

"Why—why, what do you mean?" gasped Joe. "I never put the red paint on the steps!"

"No?" queried the Dean coldly. "Then perhaps you can explain how this pot of red paint came to be hidden in your closet."

"My closet!" cried Joe, and at once a memory of the crimson stain on his coat came to him. "I never——"

"Wait," went on the Dean coldly. "I will explain. It is not altogether circumstantial evidence on which I am accusing you. The information came to me—anonymously I regret to say—that you had some red paint in your closet. The spoiling of the valuable manuscripts was such an offence that I decided to forego, for once, my ob-

jection to acting on anonymous information. I did ignore one letter that accused you——"

"Accused me!" burst out Joe, remembering the incident in chapel.

"Yes. But wait, I am not finished. I had your room examined in your absence, and we found—this." He held up a pot of red paint.

"I had the paint on the steps analyzed," went on the Dean. "It is of exactly the same chemical mixture as this. Moreover we found where this paint was purchased, and the dealer says he sold it to a student, but he will not run the risk of identifying him. But I deem this evidence enough to bar you from athletics, though I will not expel or punish you."

Barred from athletics! To Joe, with the baseball season approaching the championship crisis, that was worse than being expelled.

"I—I never did it!" he cried.

"Do you know who did, if you did not?" asked the Dean.

Like a flash it came to Joe. He could not tell. He could not utter his suspicions, though he was sure in his own heart that Weston was the guilty one—the twice guilty one, for Joe was sure his enemy had put the paint in the closet to direct suspicion to him.

"Well?" asked the Dean, coldly.

"I—I have nothing to say," faltered Joe.

"Very well. You may go. I shall not make this matter public, except to issue the order barring you from athletics."

Without a word Joe left. Inside of an hour it was noised all over the college that he could not pitch against Princeton, and great was the regret, mingled with anxiety.

"What in thunder is up?" asked Captain Hatfield, as he sought out Joe.

"Nothing."

"Oh, come off! Can't you tell?"

"No," answered Joe, and that was all he would say.

Joe did not go to the Yale-Princeton game. Yale won. Won easily, though had Weston, who pitched, not been ably supported the story might have been a different one.

"One scalp for us," announced Spike.

"Yes," assented Joe gloomily.

"Oh, you get out!" cried Spike. "I'm not going to stand for this. You've got to keep in form. There's no telling when this thing will all come out right, and you want to be in condition to pitch. You and I will keep up practice. The Dean can't stop you from that."

Nor did he try, and, though Joe was hard to move at first, he soon consented to indulge in pitching practice with his chum. And then life at Yale went on much as before, though Joe's heart was

bitter. He seldom saw Weston, who was again first choice for 'varsity pitcher.

Weston did fairly well, too, though some games Yale should have won she lost. But it was to Princeton that all eyes turned, looking for the college championship. Could Yale win the next contest?

The answer was not long delayed. Two weeks later the bulldog invaded the tiger's lair and was eaten up—to the end of his stubby tail. Yale received the worst beating in her history.

"And it's up to Weston!" declared Spike savagely, when he came back from Princeton. "He was absolutely rotten. Went up in the air first shot, and they got seven runs the first inning. Then it was all over but the shouting, for Avondale and McAnish couldn't fill in the gap. Oh, Joe, if you could only pitch!"

"But I can't."

"You've just got to! Yale has a chance yet. It's a tie now for the championship. The deciding game will be played on the New York Polo Grounds in two weeks. You've got to pitch!"

"I don't see how I can."

"Well, I'm going to!" and Spike strode from the room, his face ablaze with anger and firm with determination.

It seems that one of the janitors about the college had a son who was an epileptic. The lad

was not badly afflicted and was able, most of the time, to help his father, sometimes doing the cleaning at one of the student clubs.

It was to this club that Spike went when he burst out of his room, intent on finding, in some fashion, a way of vindicating Joe, for he was firm in his belief that Joe was innocent in spite of the silence.

There had been rain the night before, and on a billboard adjoining the club room some of the gaudy red and yellow posters, announcing the final Yale-Princeton game, had been torn off.

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Spike picked up part of a sheet, colored a vivid red. At that moment, from the side entrance, Charlie, the janitor's son, came out, and Spike, who had often given him odd tasks to do, and who felt sorry for the afflicted one, playfully thrust the red paper at him, saying:

"Here, Charlie, take it home, and let your little sister cut out some paper dolls."

He slapped the paper on the lad's hand, and being damp and pasty it stuck there, like a splotch of blood.

Charlie shrank back, cowering and frightened, whimpering like a child, and mumbling:

"Don't! Oh, don't Mr. Poole. Don't put that on me. I—I can't bear it. It's been haunting me. I'll tell all I know. The red paint—I put it there. But he—he made me. Some of it got on

my hand, and I wiped it off on his coat. Oh, the blood color! Take it away. I—I can't stand it!"

"What's that?" fairly yelled Spike. "Red paint? Here, tell me all you know! Jove, I begin to see things now!"

"Take it off! Take it off!" begged Charlie, and he trembled so that Spike feared he would have a seizure.

"There—there—it's all right, he said soothingly. "I'll take it off," and he removed the offending paper. "Now you come with me, and tell me all about it," he went on quietly. And Charlie obeyed, like a child.

A little later Spike was closeted with the Dean, taking Charlie with him, and when they came out Joe's room-mate said:

"Then the ban is removed, sir?"

"Certainly, Poole," replied the Dean, "and I will make a public explanation in the morning. I am very sorry this occurred, and I deeply regret it. But circumstances pointed to him, and I felt I had to act. Never again, though, shall I place any faith in an anonymous letter. Yes, everything will be all right. If Matson had only spoken, though!"

"It's just like him not to," said Spike.

CHAPTER XXIX

BUCKING THE TIGER

"HURRAY! Matson is going to pitch for us!"

"Get out! He's barred!"

"Not now. It's all off. He'll pitch against Princeton!"

"Where'd you hear it?"

"What's the matter with Weston?"

"Oh, he's gone — vamoosed — flew the coop. Couldn't stand the disgrace. It'll all be out in the morning."

Student meeting student on the campus, in dormitories, in the commons, at Glory's—anywhere in fact, passed these, and similar remarks.

"And to think you knew, all the while, that Weston put that red paint on the steps, and you wouldn't squeal!" cried Spike, clapping his chum on the shoulder.

"Would you?" asked Joe quietly.

"Well—er—now you have got me, old man! But it's all right. Come on out and celebrate."

And they celebrated as they never had before.

Joe was given an ovation when he entered Glory's, and every member of the nine—substitutes and all—were there to do him honor. That is, all but Weston and De Vere. They had quietly taken themselves from Yale.

The explanation was simple. Weston had, as my readers know already, put the red paint on the professor's steps. He was not discovered, for Joe kept quiet. Then, when our hero was preferred as pitcher, in the bitterness of his heart, Weston planned to throw suspicion on him. He sent the first anonymous letter, though Avondale knew nothing of it. Then Weston took De Vere into his confidence and the two evolved the scheme of smuggling the pot of red paint, that Weston had used, into Joe's closet. The epileptic lad, Charlie, was the innocent medium, and once the paint was hidden Weston sent the second anonymous letter to the Dean, telling about it.

What happened is well known. Joe was accused, and would not inform on another to save himself. Perhaps it was the wrong thing to do—certainly he owed it to himself to have the right to vindication. I am not defending him, I am only telling of what happened.

Then came the dramatic episode, when Spike unwittingly brought out the truth from Charlie. It seems that the boy's conscience had been troubling him, for though Weston pretended it

was only an innocent joke he was playing on Joe, the lad suspected something.

And so the full explanation was made to the Dean, and the latter, publicly, at chapel the next morning, begged Joe's pardon, and restored him to his full rights. As for Weston and De Vere, they were not in evidence. They had left Yale.

"Sharp practice from now on," ordered Mr. Hasbrook, when the excitement had quieted down somewhat. "We'll have to replace De Vere at right field, but otherwise the team will be the same as before. Matson, you'll pitch, of course."

"And he'll win for us, too!" cried Spike.

"I'm sure I hope so," went on the head coach. "Spike, if it wasn't so late in the season I'd let you catch. You deserve something for your share in this."

"Oh, I wouldn't think of catching now, though it would be great," declared Joe's chum. "Give me a chance next season."

"I sure will," said the head coach. "Get busy now, everybody. We've got to beat Princeton!"

"Oh, Joe, do you think we'll win?" asked Spike, half nervously, the night before they were to start for New York to meet their rivals.

"Win! Of course we'll win!" cried Joe, and though so much depended on him, he was the coolest member of the team.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CHAMPIONSHIP

SUCH a crowd as filled the big Polo Grounds! The grandstands seemed full, and the bleachers too, but the elevated and surface roads brought more constantly, and the honking autos added to the clamor. It was a perfect day, and the ball field—one of the best in the world—where professionals meet professionals—was laid out with mathematical precision.

From their lairs near the press boxes the tigers trotted to be welcomed with shouts and yells from their supporters and the songs of their fellows.

"They beat us once—as we did them," said Joe in a low voice. "They may beat us again."

"Not much!" cried Spike. "A Yale victory is in the air. I can feel it! Look at that blue," and he pointed to the sky, "and then at that," and he waved toward the azure-hued Yale stand, "and say we're going to lose! I guess not!"

"A cheer for every man!" yelled the leader of the Princeton cheer masters, who were armed with big megaphones as were their New Haven rivals,

except that the ribbons were of the tiger's stripes. "A cheer for every man!"

And then, as the Jersey cheer was howled there followed each time the name of some player—sweet music to their ears, no doubt.

"They're signalling to us," said Spike a little later. "I guess they want us inside to come out all in a bunch, as Princeton did."

This was the import of the message delivered to them a little later as they filed into the dressing rooms, where the team and substitutes now were.

"Remember, boys," said the captain solemnly, "we've got to win. It's Yale's luck against Princeton's maybe, but even with that it's got to be bulldog pluck against the tiger's fierceness. They can play ball."

"And so can we!" declared several, in low voices.

"Prove it—by beating 'em!" was the quick retort. "Pile out now, and have some snap to you!"

If Yale had gone wild, so now did the students from her rival college. The orange and black, which had been in evidence on the opposite stand to that which showed the blue, now burst forth in a frenzy of color. Hats were tossed in the air, canes too, and one excited man dashed his tall silk head covering about with such energy that he

split it on the walking stick of a gentleman seated near him.

"I beg your pardon," said the one with the stick.

"Don't mention it! My fault entirely—I'm too excited, I guess, but I used to play on the Princeton team years ago, and I came to-day to see her win. I don't care for a hat—I can buy lots more. But Princeton is going to win! Wow!"

"I'm sorry for you," said the other with a smile. "But Yale has the bulge to-day."

"Never!"

"I tell you she has!"

And then the argument began, good-natured enough, but only one of many like it going on all about the grounds.

"Hark!" said Joe to Spike, as they were walking back toward the diamond. "Isn't that great?"

There had come a momentary hush, and the sweet strains of the Princeton song—"Orange and Black," floated over the big diamond. Many of the spectators — former college men — joined in, Yale ceased her cheering while this was rendered, and then came a burst of applause, for the melody was exceptionally well rendered.

"Well, they may sing, but they can't play ball," said Spike.

Out came the bulldogs, and at once it seemed as if a bit of blue sky had suddenly descended on

the stands, so solid was the mass of ultramarine color displayed, in contrast to the orange and black.

"Joe, old man, isn't it great!" cried Spike, capering about. "To think that I'm really going to play in this big championship game!"

"It's fine!" exclaimed Joe, yet he himself was thinking how glorious it would be if he was only a professional, and could occupy the mound of the Polo Grounds regularly instead of on this rare occasion. "And I will, too, some day!" he murmured.

"Play ball!"

The practice was over, the last conference between coaches, pitchers, catchers and captains had been held. The championship was now to be contested for. Yale had won the toss and taken last chance at bat.

"Play ball!"

Joe walked to the mound, a trifle nervous, as anyone would have been under the circumstances, but, with it all, holding himself well in hand. As he got ready to deliver the customary five balls before attending to the batter a quiet-appearing man, sitting in one of the press boxes, moved so as to get a better view of the young pitcher.

"What's the matter, Mack?" asked one of the reporters. "Think you see some bushleaguers in this bunch of college boys?"

"You never can tell," was the quiet answer. "I'm always on the lookout for recruits, and I'm particularly in need of a good pitcher."

"Well, both teams have some good ones I hear," went on the newspaper man, and then he devoted himself to sending out an account of the game to his paper.

With the first ball that he delivered Joe knew that he was in shape to pitch the game of his career. He was sure of his control, and he realized that with a little care he could place the horsehide just where he wanted it to go.

"If we can only bat a few we've got this cinched," decided Joe, always aware, though, of the fatal element of luck.

The early results seemed to justify his confidence. For four innings not a Princeton man got farther than first base, and the crowd was wildly cheering him.

"If it will only last," he thought, and the memory or his sore arm came to him as a shock. But he had not suffered from it since, and he hoped he would not.

On her part Yale had managed to get one run across, and thus the game stood at the beginning of the fifth inning. In that, for one fearful moment, Joe had fears. He had been signalled to walk the heaviest batter, but something went wrong, and the man plugged a three bagger that

got past Spike. The next man up was a good hitter, and Kendall, in fear and trembling, signalled for another pass. But Joe shook his head. He was going to try to strike him out. And he did.

Amid wild roars the man was retired, and when two more had gone down, and Princeton was still without a run, pandemonium broke loose.

Though Yale tried with all her might to sweeten the score, she could not—at least in the next two innings. She batted well, but Princeton seemed to be right on the ball every time. And with only one run as a margin, the game was far from won.

"But we'll do it!" cried Hatfield, fiercely.

"That's what!" echoed Joe.

Yale's chance came in the eighth inning, when, owing to an error by the Princeton shortstop, a man got to first. None were out, and Joe rapped out a pretty two-bagger that, followed by a wild throw home, enabled a man to score. Then Joe was brought in on a sacrifice hit, and when the inning ended Yale had three more runs, making the score four to nothing in her favor.

Once more the riot of blue shot over the stands, while the orange and black fluttered listlessly. But the tiger was growling in his lair, while the bulldog was thus barking, and every Yale player knew that fortune might yet turn against them.

But when Princeton had her last chance to bat,

and only managed to get one run, it was all over but the shouting. Joe had pitched magnificently, and when the last chance of the Princeton tiger had vanished there was a rush for the young pitcher, and he was fairly carried away on the shoulders of his fellows.

And such cheering as there was!

"Yale wins!"

"Yale is champion!"

"Three cheers for Baseball Joe!"

The field swarmed with the spectators, who hardly stayed to hear the victors and vanquished cheer each other. The quiet man who had sat in the press box managed to get a word to Joe, though he had to shout to be heard above the din. The young pitcher looked startled, then pleased, and his voice faltered as he answered; after a little more talk:

"But supposing I don't make good, Mr.—er—?"

"Mack is my name, I represent the manager; in fact I'm his assistant."

"But supposing I don't make good?" repeated Joe. "I know I can do pretty well here, but, as you say, I don't seem to take to the college life. Still, I wouldn't want to make a public try as I'd have to, and then give up. It would bar me from the amateur ranks forever."

"Yes, I know that," was the answer, "but you

needn't be afraid. Look here, Matson. This isn't the first time I've done such a thing as this. It's part of my business, and part of my business to know what I'm doing. I can size a player up as quick as a horse buyer can a spavined nag. I've sized you up, and I know you're all wool and a yard wide."

"But this is the first time you've seen me play."

"It was enough, I tell you."

"And, as I said," went on Joe, "I don't want to be in the position of putting myself out of the game. If I go in with you, and fail, I probably never could get another chance."

"Oh, yes you could. But look here, Matson, you mustn't think of failure. You're not built that way. Now aren't you sport enough to take a chance?"

Joe was silent for a moment. He thought of many things—of his overpowering ambition, and then answered falteringly:

"I—I'm willing to try."

"All right, then I'll sign you," was the answer.

Another rush of the delirious students almost carried Joe off his feet. He was cheered and cheered again. Through the mob came pushing and shoving the president of the exclusive Anvil Club.

"I say, Matson," he began, "this is great! Yale has come into her own again. We'd like the

honor of electing you to our society, and would be pleased to have you make application."

"I'm much obliged to you," spoke Joe slowly, "but I'm afraid I can't."

"You can't! Why not?"

"Because I'm going to leave Yale!"

"Leave Yale!" came the indignant protest. "What for?"

"Because I have just accepted, tentatively, an offer from one of the managers of a professional league to pitch for him the rest of this season, and all of next," replied Joe quietly.

"That's right," confirmed the man who had whispered in our hero's ear. "I know a good pitcher when I see one, and there is no use of Matson wearing himself out on a college nine. He is cut out for a professional!"

And to all the protests of his classmates Joe would not give in. He knew that college was no place for him, and as the chance had come to get into the professional ranks, at good pay, he was going to take it; provided, of course, that his folks were willing.

How he did, and what happened, will be told in the next volume of this series, to be called, "Baseball Joe in the Central League; Or, Making Good as a Professional Pitcher."

"Oh, Joe, can't you reconsider, and stay at Yale?" begged Spike, when he and his chum, after

the exciting events of the championship game, were in their room once more. "I don't know what I'm going to do without you."

"Spike, old man," said Joe, and his voice broke a little. "I would like to stay, for your sake, and for some of the other fine fellows I've met here. I'd like to stay in spite of the unpleasant experience I've had. I know it's going to break mother all up to hear I've left college, but I'm not cut out for it. I'm a square peg in a round hole. I want to get into professional baseball, and I've just *got* to. I shouldn't be happy here."

"Well, if that's the case," said Spike, with a sigh, "I'm not going to say anything more. Only it sure is tough luck. Yale will miss you."

"And I'll miss her, too, in a way. But my place isn't here."

There was silence between them for a space, and then Spike said softly:

"Come on down to Glory's—for the last time, Joe."

And they went out together.

THE END

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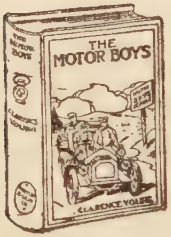

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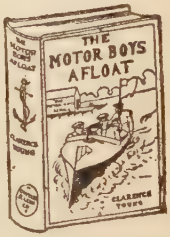

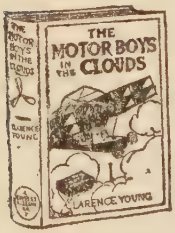

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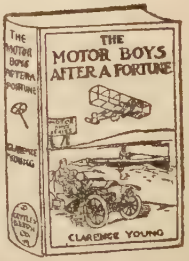

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